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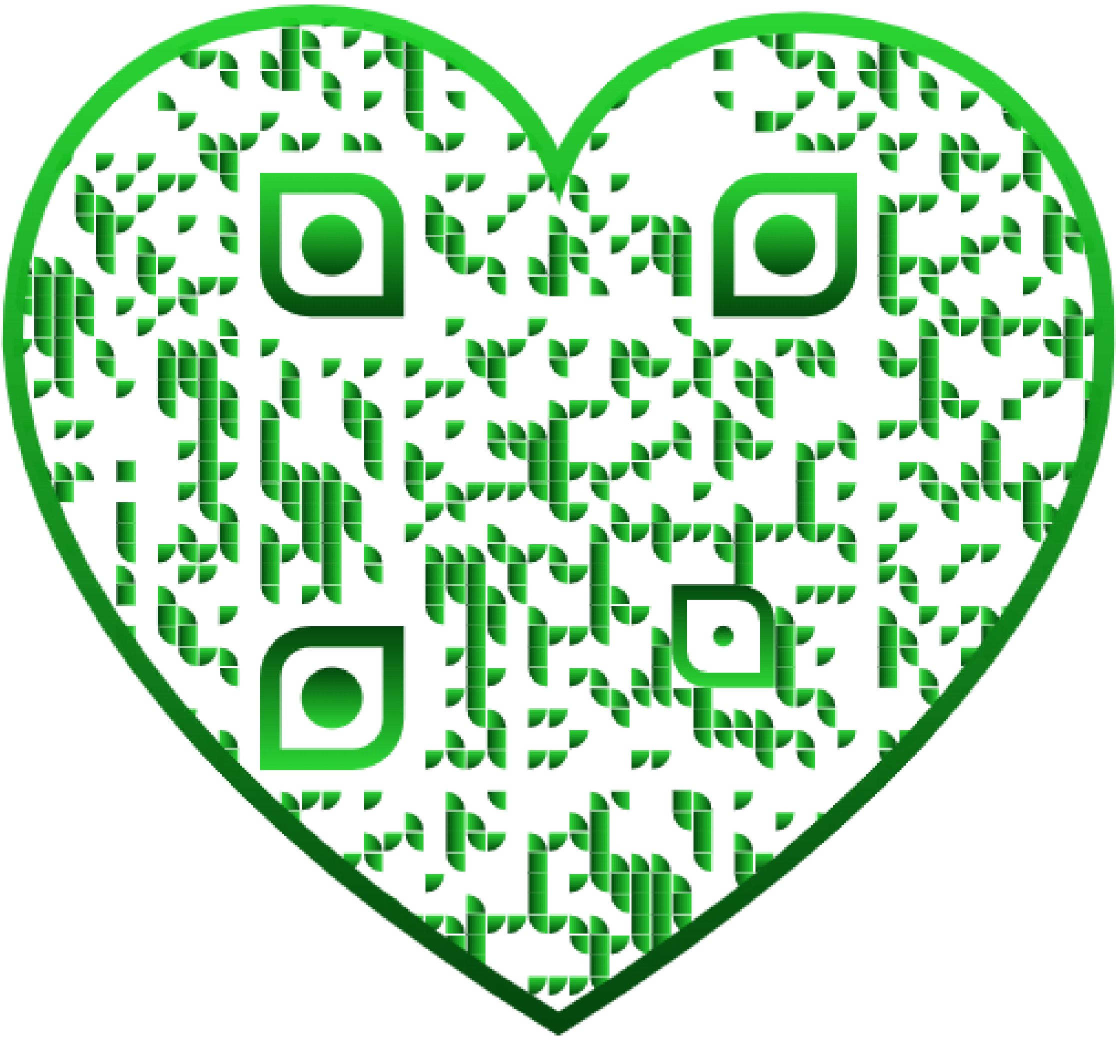

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15278 - Bass Collection Jive Bass Black n Blocks
15510 - Bass Collection Rhythm Stick, Sunburst
10067 - Brian May Bass in Cherry with Gig Bag

Cort

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19701 - Cort Action Junior Bass, Walnut OPW
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16069 - Eich 212L Bass Cabinet
16070 - Eich 212M Bass Cabinet
16048 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 4 Ohm
16050 - Eich 212S Bass Cabinet 8 Ohm
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16061 - Eich 612XL Bass Cab
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16321 - Gallien Krueger CX115 Bass Cabinet
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We pride ourselves that there is no hierarchy in the world of bass: by and large it's a friendly place to be, with equal respect afforded to bassists from all genres and of all approaches. Indeed, respect is the key word in this issue as with all others, whether we're raising a glass to Roger Glover of Deep Purple after close to half a century at the low end; saluting Jerry Barnes of Chic for stepping into the biggest shoes in bass; or tipping the hat to Ryan Madora for her devotion to building a respected career as session bassist and educator. (Hot tip: Ryan will be launching a new regular lesson in our next issue!)

The same principle applies to the bass luthiers and gear manufacturers who are the life blood of what we do, down among the fundamental frequencies. In this issue we review products from the affordable to the costly, we explore best practices when it comes to the use of essential gear, and we meet the planet's best bass teachers – all of this with the stated aim of making ourselves the most accomplished bassists we can possibly be. That's still the goal, just as it always has been, and with your continued support, we'll get there together.

Stay healthy, stay positive, and I'll see you again in four weeks.

Joel McIver, Editor

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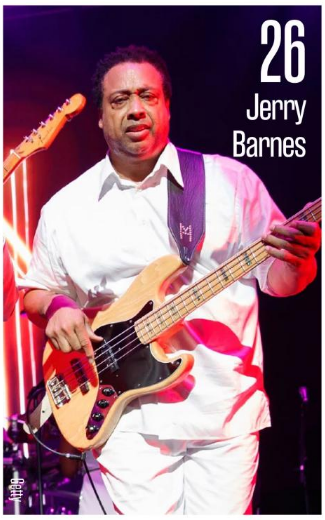

Bassists

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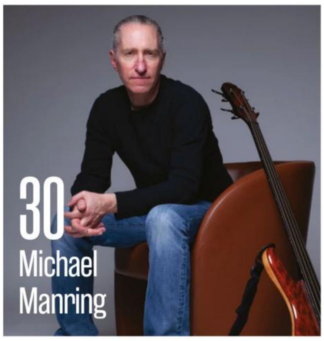

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JIMMY HASLIP RETURNS

Classic solo records reissued — plus a challenging guest session.

"It's time that these albums were heard again," says the great Jimmy Haslip when we call him to ask about the reissue of Red Heat (2000) and Nightfall (2011) by Blue Canoe Records. "They were released at emotional times in my life, and it's been wonderful to listen to them again after so long."

You can also hear Haslip on the acclaimed drummer Gergo Borlai's new album, The Missing Song, where each cut pays tribute to a renowned percussionist. Haslip's track was dedicated to Billy Cobham, inspiring a phenomenal performance from our man that has to be seen to be believed – especially, as his disciples know, because he plays his extended-range instrument upside-down and left-handed. Other bassists on Borlai's album include Stuart Hamm, Gary Willis and Hadrien Feraud, making it a must-listen around these parts.

In our forthcoming Haslip feature, the Yellowjackets founder and guest bassist on hundreds of sessions with Robben Ford, Allan Holdsworth and many more stellar artists talks in detail about the bassists who inspired him, the bass gear that allows his talent to flourish – and the advantages of that playing style.

We also couldn't let him go without asking what it was like to receive bass lessons from Jaco Pastorius in 1975: an "explosion of creativity" sums the experience up pretty well...

www.jimmyhaslipbass.com
www.bluecanoerecords.com

CLASSIC REISSUES

Macca and Bailey incoming

Sir Paul McCartney recently announced the re-release plans for his 1997 solo album, *Flaming Pie*, as the 13th instalment of his Grammy-winning Archive Collection. Inspired by the Beatles *Anthology* project of the mid-Nineties, the album lifted the rockin' knight from the creative lull that he'd experienced for some years previously

At the time, McCartney said: "The *Anthology* reminded me of the standards that we reached with the songs. In a way it was a refresher course that set the framework for this album." The public agreed, and made *Flaming Pie* a hit.

Elsewhere, Weather Report's *Live In London* is set for release on CD for the first time. This live show was recorded "at some point in the Eighties", and while other details remain sketchy, what is not in doubt is the quality of the music. The Joe Zawinul-led band features the much-missed bassist Victor Bailey, and liner notes come from Zawinul's son Tony, who accurately observes: "No band in the history of modern jazz has left a more transformative legacy than Weather Report".

IN THE GROOVES

Albums rocking our office this month

NEW ALBUM

Lamb Of God, Lamb Of God (2020)
Ridiculously fast speed-picking skills from the fleet-fingered John Campbell.

OLD ALBUM

Lena Horne, We'll Be Together Again **(1994)**
Tracy Wormworth, now of the B-52s, played double bass on this Grammy-nominated jazz suite.

REALLY OLD ALBUM

Marvin Gaye, I Heard It Through The Grapevine (1968)
It's James Jamerson, what more do you need? The great man would have been 84 this year.

INCOMING GEAR

A new Cort A4 bass is on the way, Phil Jones Bass delivers a new cab, Mesa amp up their Subway range... and new Vintage variants can be yours

There's a stack of cool bass products coming down the pipe, from the costly to the affordable and all points in between. If you've got a spare $1999.99 and space in the rack for Cort's new A4 Ultra Ash, you'll find the new addition to the Artisan bass series loaded with features from headstock to bridge. The neck-through A4 comes with an ash body top, Fishman Fluence Bass Soapbar pickups and two-band EQ, a five-piece maple and panga panga neck – with the latter timber also used on the 24-fret fingerboard – and a dedicated three-way miniswitch for multi-voice control. A Hipshot TransTone Bridge and Ultralite machine heads complete the package.

The venerable Phil Jones Bass has announced the new C2 bass cab, described by the company as "a 200 watt shoebox size cabinet containing the smallest speaker ever produced by PJB". As you'll know from previous PJB products, they're able to conjure huge low-end frequencies using small and midsized speakers, in this case two 5" units. They suggest pairing the C2 with PJB 8 ohm cabinets or combos such as the BG-400 Suitcase Compact.

Elsewhere in amp world, Mesa/Boogie have added a new Subway TT-800 head to its Subway amp series. The unit's tube-driven preamp enables bassists to access "the rich, blooming tube character of the legendary tone stack architecture from the Bass 400 in the Boogie channel" or a more modern Subway channel sound.

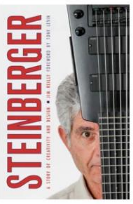
Both channels feed the unit's 800-watt Class D power section, and there are numerous tone-shaping and connection options. We look forward to putting it through its paces.

Looking for an affordable bass? We quite fancy the new Vintage instruments, available around the £350/$400 mark. New Firenza Red and Vintage White finishes have been added to the poplar-bodied V4 Icon series, with pre-worn options and nickel hardware. Very tasty.

NED STEINBERGER BIOGRAPHY

New book profiles the legendary luthier

Author Jim Reilly has been kind enough to send us a copy of his new book, Steinberger: A Story Of Creativity And Design, and we recommend it highly to anyone interested in how a blend of science and artistic imagination can lead to innovation. Ned Steinberger's authorised biog includes a foreword by none other than Tony Levin and digs deep into a world of creativity.



Quite aside from designing the Spector NS-1, which other luthier would literally chop a bass headstock off its neck to see how the balance is affected? Heads off... we mean, hats off to Jim for telling this long-anticipated story. Get the book for around $24.95/£15.95 in print and e-book editions.

LOW LIFE

Tax The Heat bassist and BIMM Live Performance Tutor Antonio Angotti addresses the fine art of singing for your supper

BIMM INSTITUTE

Welcome back, bassists! In an industry where it is becoming increasingly desirable to handle multiple roles to get a gig, it will prove useful to discuss the skill of managing backing vocals while playing bass. These two skills form one of the most challenging combinations to carry off, and they take a lot of practice to refine – but here are my top tips to help you along the way...

START SIMPLE

As with anything new, it's important not to drop yourself in the deep end. I find a number of my students initially try to get from A to Z as rapidly as possible, because the fastest route is regarded as the best one. Believe me, that's not the case – we should always value substance over speed in order to build a solid foundation for a skill to develop. Otherwise, you'll end up with a mediocre, superficial representation of true ability. With that in mind, select a track with a simple bass part that provides a steady rhythmic role, using quarter or eighth notes against which you can practise a backing vocal part. This will ease you into handling simultaneous roles, before moving to material where both aspects cross phrasing and timing.

SEPARATE THE TASKS

Before attempting both parts simultaneously, it is essential that you practise them individually. In terms of preparing your bass part, you should put some consideration into how you finger the part on the fretboard. I try to implement a one-finger-per-fret approach, retaining as much of the line within a four-fret radius across the strings and allowing for manageable single-tone (or two-fret) shifting in either direction if required. That way, we don't need to keep our eyes on the fretboard during the gig, and we'll be able to keep our heads up for singing into the mic. In regard to vocals, pitching is the key element – without this, it's all for nothing. Make sure that you first practise the pitching of each note – you could use your bass for this to give reference and match it vocally – or even harmonise, for those more experienced. Apply this process to the vocal part you're learning, making sure that you memorise the lyrics and the articulation of the lead vocal that you will be backing to create a close blend. It's at this point that most of us realise how tough it is to sing and play at the same time...

MAXIMISE YOUR MIC TECHNIQUE

Unsurprisingly, there's a little more to singing than standing in front of a mic and warbling at it. First, understand the effect of proximity on how our vocal part comes across. You may be advised to move away from the mic when you're doing backing vocals, but this just makes the front-of-house engineer's job more difficult, because you'll be too quiet. It is their job to balance levels, and they need an ample level to work with in the first place. Your vocal will also sound thinner from being further back, so aim to sing one or two inches away from the mic. If you need to be louder in projection, come off the mic a little more, maybe to four inches away. Another consideration is that you may feel tethered to the mic, but consider your visual performance; coming away from the mic between lines is fine, as long as you remember to get back to it in time for the next line. Don't laugh – it happens!

PIECE IT ALL TOGETHER

Once both vocal and bass parts are well-learned, work on them together. There will be times where they don't sync, so you'll need to go into detail with where certain vocal syllables fit over specific subdivisions of the bass part. Loop it in smaller sections, as repetition helps. Take your time – I concentrate on the vocal at the gig, while I trust my hands to go off on their own and produce the bass part. Managing both together develops over time. The more you do it, the more confident you will become – it's just a case of adjusting to the increase in preparation from what you are used to when solely playing bass.

"WE SHOULD ALWAYS VALUE SUBSTANCE OVER SPEED TO BUILD A SOLID FOUNDATION"

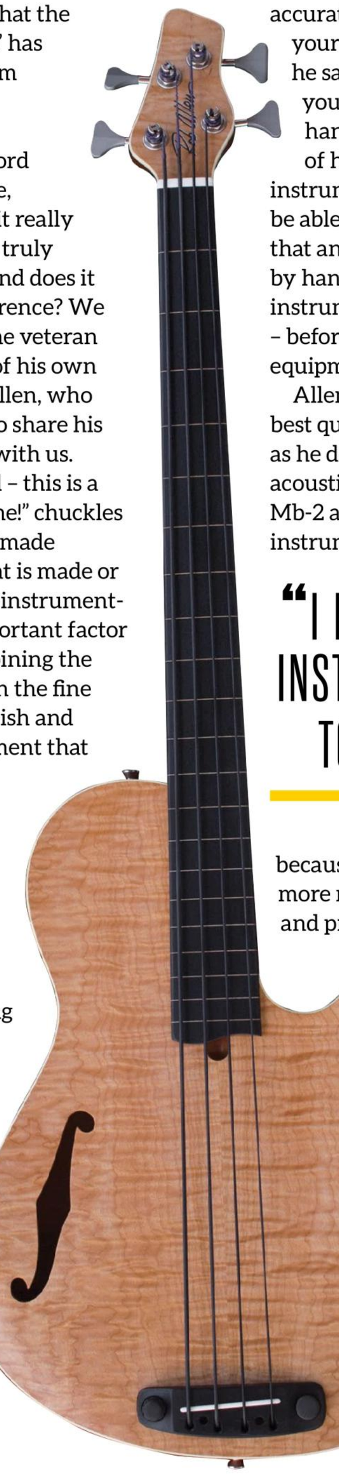
Chris Wolstenholme of Muse is adept at singing and playing bass at the same time. No 'Hysteria' in his performance...

Getty

BASS OF **TOMORROW**

With technology playing a key role in today's workshops, we quiz luthier Rob Allen about what it truly means for a bass to be 'handmade'...

Words: Hywel Davies



There's no doubt that the term 'handmade' has some romanticism surrounding it, especially among us musicians. Put the word under the microscope, however; what does it really mean for a bass to be truly handmade in 2020, and does it make much of a difference? We put the question to the veteran luthier and founder of his own bass company, Rob Allen, who is more than happy to share his angle on the subject with us.

"I'm glad you asked – this is a favourite topic of mine!" chuckles Allen. "To me, a handmade instrument is one that is made or overseen by a career instrument-maker. The most important factor is selecting and combining the right woods, and then the fine details of sanding, finish and assembly. The judgement that comes with years or decades of building instruments lets you know when things are just right."

Handling a computer keyboard is as important nowadays as handling a saw, it seems. As long as a human makes the creative decisions, what role does technology play in the handmaking process?

"If you decide to machine your parts on a CNC router, it's the quickest, most accurate, and safest way to build because your hands aren't near the cutters," he says. "This buys back time so that you can give more attention to the hand-detailing. Done properly, a ton of handwork goes into any CNC-made instrument; in the end, you should never be able to tell the difference between that and an instrument made entirely by hand. I personally made at least 100 instruments – with basic tools, in a garage – before I switched to more sophisticated equipment, so I've experienced both sides."

Allen's instruments represent the best qualities of both worlds, focusing as he does most of his time on semi-acoustic basses such as his Mouse 30, Mb-2 and Deep 4/5 models. "Semi-hollow instruments have always attracted me

> "I PERSONALLY MADE 100 INSTRUMENTS WITH BASIC TOOLS IN A GARAGE"

because in general, they're lighter and more resonant than solid instruments, and produce more interesting overtones," he tells us. "I use a piezo pickup, which is really a vibration sensor of sorts, so the wood plays a very important role in the sound."

He adds: "Of the models I regularly produce, my favourite is the Mouse 30. This has the bridge near the end of the body and it's very comfortable to play. It has a super-thick sound due to the short scale and slightly lower string tension. Short-scale basses

have often been budget or introductory models, and I wanted to make one that was built to full professional standards, as far as materials and craftsmanship go."

"My overall design philosophy is this," he concludes. "First, make an instrument that sounds really good on its own acoustically, with no amp. Once the bass sounds and resonates correctly and has a great vibe, then go about amplifying it with the pickups best suited for it. In essence, harness the tone in the wood. You can alter things with pickup choice – but you can't add resonance if it's not in the instrument."

www.roballenguitars.com

THE WOODSHED

Intonation basics explored and explained by ace luthier Rob Elrick. Let's get toned!

Welcome back to the Woodshed! In my last article, we discussed the subjective nature of 'optimal' setup and how it can be entirely different for every player. Understanding how to adjust your bass to achieve the best setup for your personal technique is incredibly valuable – and while there is no one ideal setup for every player, there is a component that has to be the same for everyone, which is intonation. Let's continue down the path to attaining your best personal setup by exploring the simple, but often confounding, task of adjusting your bass's intonation.

Unlike making the adjustments necessary for your ideal physical setup, intonation is something that is not subjective at all and is particularly important when playing in an ensemble. Bass players are often responsible for the lowest note played in an ensemble at virtually every moment. A bass instrument that is out of tune leads to the entire band sounding out of tune, which means that the maintenance of your instrument's intonation is critical.

> "MAKING THE BASIC ADJUSTMENTS SHOULD BE ROUTINE"

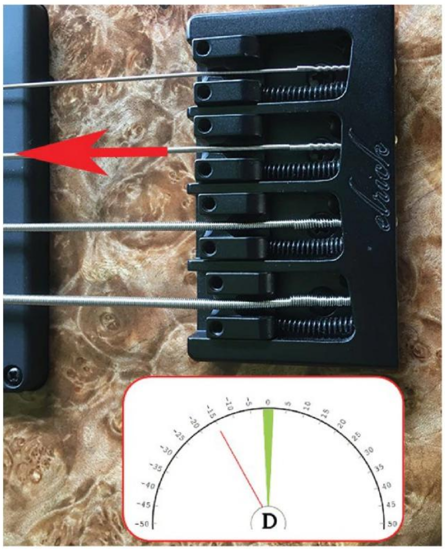
If a fretted instrument's intonation is not properly adjusted, notes become progressively out of tune as you play up the neck. To compound this problem, this inconsistency in tuning may also not be uniform from string to string, making things particularly problematic when playing chords. If you've never experienced this phenomenon at first hand, you're probably getting the job done in first position and keeping things in the pocket. You probably work twice as much as anyone who dares venture north of the seventh fret, but intonation is especially important as it's twice as likely you're getting paid to play.

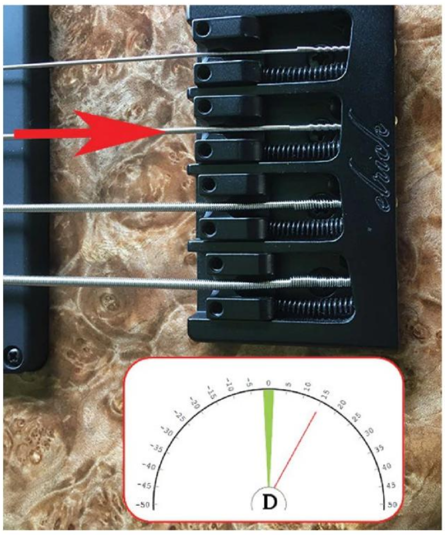
Unless you're playing a fretless bass, tuning open strings is just the starting point to an instrument that plays in tune across the length of its fretboard. We will assume that your bass has already been adjusted for playability. Now, get out a tuner and any tools required to adjust your bridge saddles, and we'll get started.

Holding the bass in playing position, not laid flat on a workbench, tune each open string to pitch using the 12th fret harmonic. This harmonic will always be your reference pitch. With the harmonic note in tune, play a note at the 12th fret, taking care not to bend the string. Compared to the harmonic, the note will be either in tune, flat, or sharp. If the tuning of the fretted note does not match that of the harmonic, you will need to adjust the corresponding bridge saddle. If the fretted note is sharp, the bridge saddle will need to be adjusted to make the nominal length of the string longer. If the note is flat, adjust the saddle to make the string shorter. Reaching pitch equilibrium will often require retuning a string to the 12th fret reference harmonic numerous times, until both the harmonic and fretted notes are in tune with one another. Simple, right?

I know what you're thinking: 'Isn't there an easy way of remembering which direction to move the saddles?' There is indeed. If you're using a tuner with a VU meter display, or a display that simulates a meter, the needle will point the way. As you hold your bass, the needle on a tuner will point to the right for a sharp note, and to the left for a flat note. The direction the needle points is the same direction in which the saddle should be adjusted, unless you are playing a left-hand bass, in which case the opposite is true – something to which I expect lefties are accustomed.

Now that your bass's intonation is properly adjusted, you're done, right? Well, not exactly. This type of adjustment is not a 'set it and forget it' operation. It should be part of your instrument's routine maintenance and done every time you change your strings. If you're the sort of bassist who seldom, if ever, changes strings, it's important to make periodic checks, since the tuning characteristics of a string will change as they age and s-t-r-e-t-c-h.





But you say you always play the same strings? Same brand, same gauge, same everything? That doesn't matter. There are a number of factors that can contribute to why one string may not intonate at the same length as another, but the exploration of those factors does not change the fact that they exist. Making the basic adjustments required to keep your bass in tune should be part of every player's routine. Becoming comfortable with general maintenance will not only make your bass more fun to play, it will also save you money.

www.elrick.com

THEORY OF THE MONTH

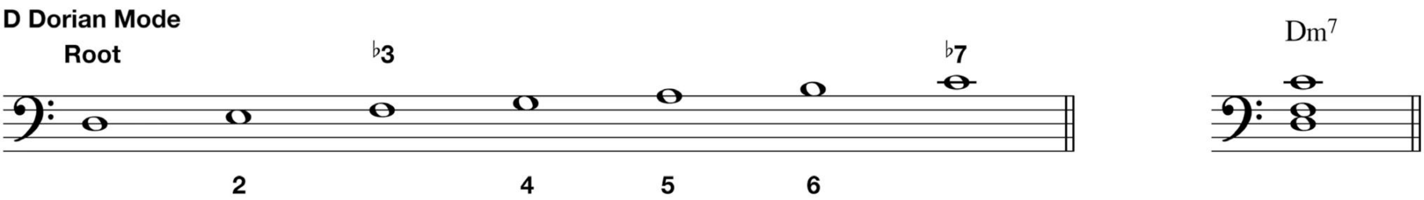
Play diatonic chords in a major key area with the mighty Joe Hubbard

TRINITY COLLEGE LONDON

When learning the bass, an important element to focus on is being able to hear different chord qualities such as major 7th, minor 7th and dominant 7th. Often, bassists struggle to identify these chord qualities by ear, simply because they don't play them on their instrument. Because of the range of the bass guitar, chords can often sound muddy or inappropriate; too many chord tones can obscure the characteristics of the chord quality that you're trying to play.

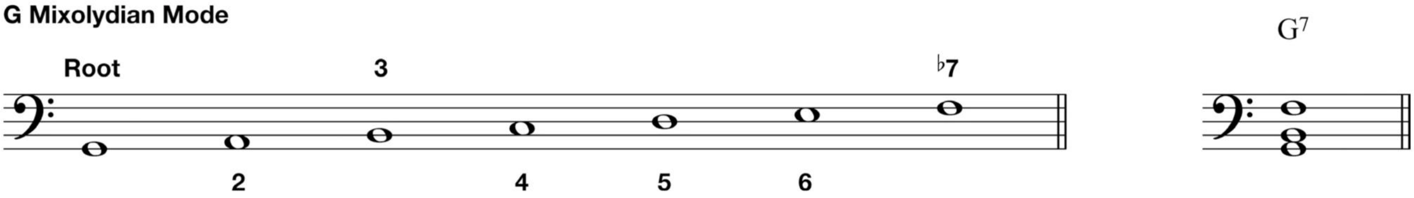
For this reason, the safest and most useable chord voicings are three-note chords consisting of the root, 3rd and 7th. As there are no 5ths, 9ths, 11ths or 13ths, any alterations in the chord symbols become irrelevant. Let's play some examples...

Example 1



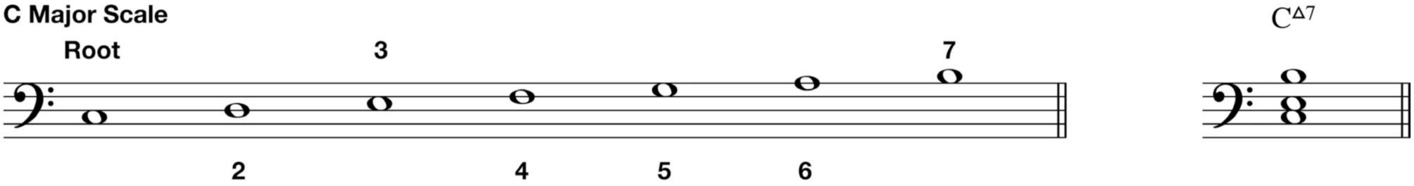
Example 1 shows how to derive the root-3-7 chord voicing for the minor 7th chord using the D Dorian mode. For the best results, play all the chord voicings an octave above.

Example 2



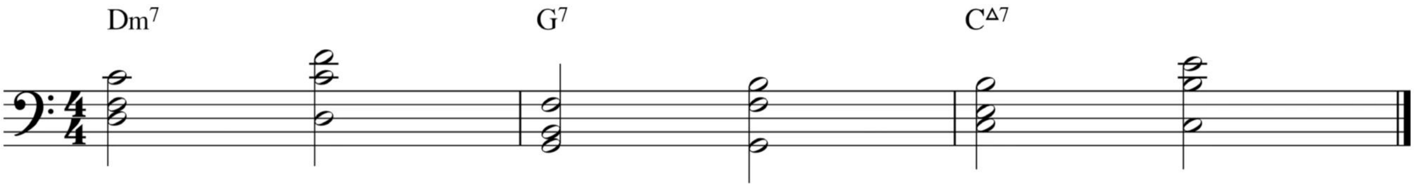
Now, in Example 2 we derive the root-3-7 chord voicing for the dominant 7th chord using the G Mixolydian mode.

Example 3



In the next example, we have the original chord voicings that we derived from the corresponding scales, but I've also added a variation by simply raising the middle note in the voicing up an octave. These are handy options to have when voice-leading from one chord to another.

Example 4



Your assignment – if you're willing to accept this mission! – is to learn these chord voicings, which make up a II-7, V7, Imaj7 chord progression, and learn them in every key. A good tip is not to go below the 10th fret of your bass, as this is where things will start to sound a little muddy. Good luck, and until next time, practise smart, work hard and play creatively!

FIRST BASS

A killer section of the mag devoted to new, new-ish or just amazing bass players

MARIE TORNETTO

SHARP VIOLET

What was your way into bass?
I always wanted to play with a band, but was very intimidated to try. I started out with the intention of becoming a guitarist but never gained any traction in my playing. Just as I was about to give up, I tried out the bass and everything just clicked. I felt an immediate connection with the instrument, and haven't put it down since. My first love was a Fender Jazz, which I still use to this day.

What bass gear do you currently use?
My basses are a Fender Jaguar with a short scale and my Jazz bass. For effects, I use a Darkglass Microtubes B7K Ultra, a Boss Digital Delay DD-5, a Boss Compression Sustainer CS-3, an MXR Bass Chorus Deluxe, a Mooer E-Lady and a DigiTech Drop. The amp is a Fender Rumble 500.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
Relentless practice in multiple genres. I also like to surround myself with musicians that are more skilled than I am. The first band I joined was a classic rock and metal cover band, in which all the members had been playing music for as long as I've existed. At this point, I'd only been playing bass for a year, but I was determined to make it work. I would sit for five hours at time trying to learn 'War Pigs' or 'Highway Star', and I was like, 'Damn... Can you guys pick a song that's not eight minutes long?' It was a lot of work, but it made me into a much stronger player.

Which bass player do you most admire?
Paul McCartney, and my other heroes are Carol Kaye, James Jamerson, Ryan Martinie, Paz Lenchantin, Geezer Butler, Bill Wyman, John Deacon, Eva Gardner and many more.

Where can we hear you play?
Sharp Violet is an all-female punk band from Long Island, New York. A modern spin on the Riot Grrl bands of the Nineties, we are known for our high-energy shows and no-apology lyrics. We plan on dropping an EP in the summer of 2020.

www.marietornetto.com

WARREN MURREL

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK

Matt Morgan

What was your way into bass?
The funny thing is, I grew up playing drums, and pursued it most of my life. I picked up bass on the side for fun when I couldn't get loud on a kit. I initially started by playing in reggae bands and then just tried to play with as many people as I could. Before I knew it, I was getting more calls for bass and eventually drums became the side instrument. My mom bought me a Yamaha TRB1005 five-string when I was in high school. My dad was a big Grateful Dead fan and insisted I play a six-string; I think they settled on five. I used that bass for years, still have it and play it a bunch. It sounds great.

What bass gear do you currently use?
I also own a Fender P-Bass modified with Fralin pickups, but my newest purchase is an Echo Park J-Bass. It is amazing, it's got a slab sassafras body with a buckeye top, ebony fretboard with block inlays and an EPG Silver coil and 62 J pickup set. The sound is huge, and the bass looks beautiful. I use the Echo Park bass with an Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 and Aguilar DB 212 cab. I also run a Darkglass Vintage Microtubes pedal for overdrive.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
Don't get in the way, and play to support each song as best as possible. Find spots where you can add some flavour but try and maintain the groove and pocket of each tune you're playing. I still get floored watching a bassist and drummer who can just sit in the pocket together and really groove.

Which bass player do you most admire?
Jaco. His approach, creativity, and sound changed the game forever. He really pushed the boundaries for what the instrument could do and changed the perception of the role of a bass player forever. He paved the way for so many monster players to come.

Where can we hear you play?
Robert Jon & The Wreck's new album *Last Light On The Highway* is out now. We will be touring in Europe May through July 2021.

www.robertjonandthewreck.com

PETRA GOETZEN

TEN THIRTY UNDERGROUND, THE SMOKIES

What was your way into bass?
When I was 12, I got my first guitar, but I had never really gotten into it seriously. A friend of mine had an old Ibanez Gio which he wanted to sell, so I thought I'd give it a try. So here I was, almost 51 years old, holding my first bass in my hands, and I was hooked. I had to find a bass teacher, so I attended the local music academy where I took my first lessons. After playing bass for six months I was playing in my first band, and after another six months I started playing with the Smokies.

What bass gear do you currently use?
My basses are a Fender 60 Vintage Jazz, a Sandberg Ken Taylor custom which I play at gigs, and Ibanez SR670 which I use for practice. I use a Markbass CMD 121H LM3 amp because of its awesome, flexible sound, and a Hartke HA2500 head and a XL Series 4.5 XL cab at rehearsals.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
Feel the bass! And don't get high while you're playing it low.

Which bass player do you most admire?
Marcus Miller or James Jamerson.

Where can we hear you play?
The current band I'm playing in is called Ten Thirty Underground. Before that, I played in the Smokies, a Smokie tribute band. My husband Armin Goetzen – the guitarist for the band Steel-Strinx – and I are currently working on songs which we will hopefully put on stage soon.

www.the-smokies.de

JEFF WILLIAMS

ONSLAUGHT

What was your way into bass?
I first got hooked into the idea of playing in a band after I'd seen the gatefold of Kiss' *Alive II* in my local music shop. That was the real 'lightbulb' moment for me – I was completely obsessed over it, and I guess that was the catharsis of me eventually picking up the bass. I started playing when I was 15.

What bass gear do you currently use?
I'm now using Caparison basses exclusively. The quality and playability of their instruments is just outstanding. They are also remarkably stable, changes in humidity and temperature when you're touring – especially somewhere like in South and Central America – doesn't seem to affect them at all. At the moment I have an original 'old school' Caparison Dellinger, that was recently fitted with an EMG PJX pickup set – which just gives it a 'bigger' sound, like you're running at 18v, even though you just have the single battery. I had a custom Dellinger made with a black gloss ash body, an ebony fretboard and just one volume pot. I've also recently taken delivery of one of their brand-new Dellingers. They're now fitted with Fishman's Fluence pickup system. I use a 1mm Dunlop Nylon pick to get a nice percussion and an initial attack from the strings, which are Elixir Nickel Plated Steel 45/105,. The signal then goes through a Tech 21 SansAmp, a Boss TU2 Tuner and into the amp. Amplifier wise, I've been using a combination of Ashdown and Mesa Boogie. I have a new Ashdown 'Head of Doom' ready to try out, which I'm really excited about

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
My first bass was a Hondo II Professional. It was a real spiteful piece of crap. It had a fat neck that felt like a half-sawn baseball bat and the action was high enough to fly a biplane under, but I was determined to play so I stuck with it. Don't give up!

Which bass player do you most admire?
Gene Simmons and Bootsy Collins.

Where can we hear you play?
With the new Onslaught album, *Generation Antichrist*, the bass was recorded in Bristol and then sent to Daniel Bergstrand's studio in Sweden, where he then re-amped it through an old Ampeg Blueline SVT turned up to 10. He's also used a little more compression on the bass with this new album, which does sound really cool, so that's something I might look at bringing to my live setup too. Next year we'll be touring the world extensively, and also hitting the major festivals to promote the new album.

www.onslaughtuk.com

MIMI JASSON

DREAM NAILS

What was your way into bass?
I had only played bass live a few times before I joined Dream Nails. I am firstly a classical pianist, and was finishing my degree in piano performance when I was asked to audition for the band. I did play a bit when I was a teenager, playing full Beastie Boys albums, but didn't have anyone else to play with!

What bass gear do you currently use?
I have a short-scale Fender Musicmaster from the Eighties. I endorse GHS Strings and use flatwounds. My effects are a Tech21 CompTortion and a Swollen Pickle Fuzz.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
The music teacher in me has to say that practice is the number one thing. I think listening, relaxing into it and breathing are the keys to having a good feel. I love how there is so much subtlety in how the bass and where you place the notes can change the feel of a song completely.

Which bass player do you most admire?
Arif Mirabdolbaghi is my favourite bass player, he played in a band called Protest The Hero. He also wrote all of the music, and everything moved and worked together perfectly. His bass tone was extremely low and muddy, and wouldn't sound nice on its own, but in the mix it comes through with the best sound. I really like the way his playing is about complementing the overall sound, listening to other parts, but also shredding. James Jamerson is the greatest bass player who ever lived. I'm sure everyone reading this is very familiar with him. The way he plays is nothing short of otherworldly.

Where can we hear you play?
Dream Nails is an all-women feminist punk band from London. Our debut self-titled album is out now.

www.dreamnails.bandcamp.com

Victor Moreno

GIZMO VARILLAS

What was your way into bass?
It all started when I first got into writing songs on guitar and producing them in my bedroom. At the time, I added lots of rhythmic elements and percussion but I always missed bass to fill out my recordings. I bought a second-hand bass years ago and since then I use it on a daily basis – it's an integral part of my music-making.

What bass gear do you currently use?
At the moment I use a Keeley Compressor Plus pedal, and if I want a little more grit, I switch on my Fredric Effects Golden Eagle. It's a very cool boutique overdrive. In my live band, I have bass player Mike Kenna, who also played a lot on my new album, and he used a Fender Jazz on a lot of the tracks. He let me have a go on his Jazz and I loved it. I actually think it's great to have a slightly different sound to create more dynamics throughout an album and that makes for a more colourful listening experience. Larry Graham and Verdine White used a Jazz so it is definitely on my bucket list. I can't wait to get my hands on my own one.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
Bernard Edwards from Chic said it best – land on the one. When writing a bass-line, as simple as it may sound, it is so important and true. Listen to the instrumentation and the underlying rhythm, and think about what you can add to what's already there without overpowering it. Sometimes simple is better.

Which bass player do you most admire?
Flea is one of my favourites – he can be melodic and funky, and has really memorable lines. I think there are loads of incredible players out there, but for me, he stands out as someone who can write a melody that you can't get out of your head.

Where can we hear you play?
You can hear me playing on my upcoming album and on YouTube.

www.gizmovarillas.com

EDWIN KAMPFIRTH

LONG BEACH DUB ALLSTARS

What was your way into bass?
I begrudgingly took piano lessons from four to 14 years of age. Right about the time that my parents finally let me quit, my brother happened to give me an old hand-me-down bass. I loved it, started plucking around and learning songs right away. It was a Fender Musicmaster and I had no idea that it had a short scale. Next was a Yamaha BB300, which was a step up, and then a Musicman Stingray that was amazing. I played that Stingray for 20 years and then sold it when I thought I was going to quit music. Of course, I had to buy everything back when I started taking gigs again and turning myself into a working musician.

What bass gear do you currently use?
I have a new Stingray, a '62 reissue Fender P-Bass, a 2011 Fender P-Bass, a 2011 Fender Jazz, a Sire Marcus Miller V7 Jazz, a Yamaha BB734A, a 2013 Fender Mustang, and a 2016 Fender Mustang PJ. Any one of those basses will be used according to whatever gig I have, as some gigs require a certain sound. I mostly use my P-Basses and Jazz bass with the Long Beach Dub Allstars. I tend to use my Yamaha and my Stingray with my other gig, an 80s cover band called Knyght Ryder. As far as amps, I have an Orange 4-Stroke 500 and a 2x12 Orange OBC cabinet that I use for most gigs. I also have a random 15" cab that I can connect to that for my full stack. I usually only use the full rig for outside shows. I also have an Ampeg Micro for practice and recording at home.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
Listen to what's going on and serve the song, not yourself.

Which bass player do you most admire?
Mike Watt. Growing up, the Minutemen and Firehose were so important to me. I really related to his bass-lines. The funk in his grooves with the punk attitude seemed more genuine and hit me much harder than most of the 'funk punk' movement that was all the rage at the time. Powerful stuff, and he's managed to keep forging ahead with his own style. No-one sounds like him, no other albums sound like his, and he's made a life out of this. A true original.

Where can we hear you play?
Long Beach Dub Allstars have a new self-titled album out. I'm also currently working remotely and laying down some bass for Joel Jerome. Long time fan, excited to be working with him.

www.lbdamusic.com

Tony Turrietta

BRUNO SEGOVIA

IRIST

What was your way into bass?
I was originally a guitar player. I started playing bass about eight years ago in a punk band with Pablo, the guitarist in Irist. The bass player in that band flaked out so I just jumped on it and it stuck. My first bass was a cheap $100 Squier P/J that I gutted and upgraded with a Quarter Pounder Precision pickup, an American Vintage Noiseless Jazz pickup, Schaller tuners, a Gotoh bridge, a Tusq nut and CTS pots/jack. It turned out to be a great-sounding instrument.

What bass gear do you currently use?
My two basses are both mostly Warmoth Jazz builds with Schaller hardware and custom Avedissian pickups. One has a body made by a local luthier from reclaimed heart pine and a quarter-sawn roasted maple neck. The other has a roasted swamp ash body and a Brazilian ebony neck. My main amp is a Gallien-Krueger and I also use a Darkglass Hyper Luminal compressor, an IdiotBox Han-Taun overdrive and various Fuzzrocious, Walrus Audio, MXR, Earthquaker and Digitech effects.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
Using a compressor and a lighter pick makes life much easier. It's hard to pick one thing I've learned that is the 'best', but that was definitely one that made a big difference in my playing.

Which bass player do you most admire?
Cliff Burton, Les Claypool, Juan Alderete and Justin Chancellor are my favourite players in many ways, but if I had to pick one I'd go with Bobby Vega. I think he's hard to beat when it comes to groove and technique.

Where can we hear you play?
Our debut album *Order Of The Mind* is out now via Nuclear Blast.

www.iristband.com

TOM MARTIN

VEGA

What was your way into bass?
I actually trained as a guitarist. I was told I had good timing, so bass started to interest me. I then started to play bass in band, and I've never looked back. My first bass guitar was a blue Music Man Stingray – it looked great and sounded awesome. The twang on the twelfth octave was unique, but the neck felt a bit long for me so I sold it and bought a black Fender Precision. I then started playing Hagstrom bass guitars – I use a cherry red Swede bass from time to time. It has a mahogany neck and body so it feels a bit like a Les Paul bass. It gives a real thud when pumping those eighths.

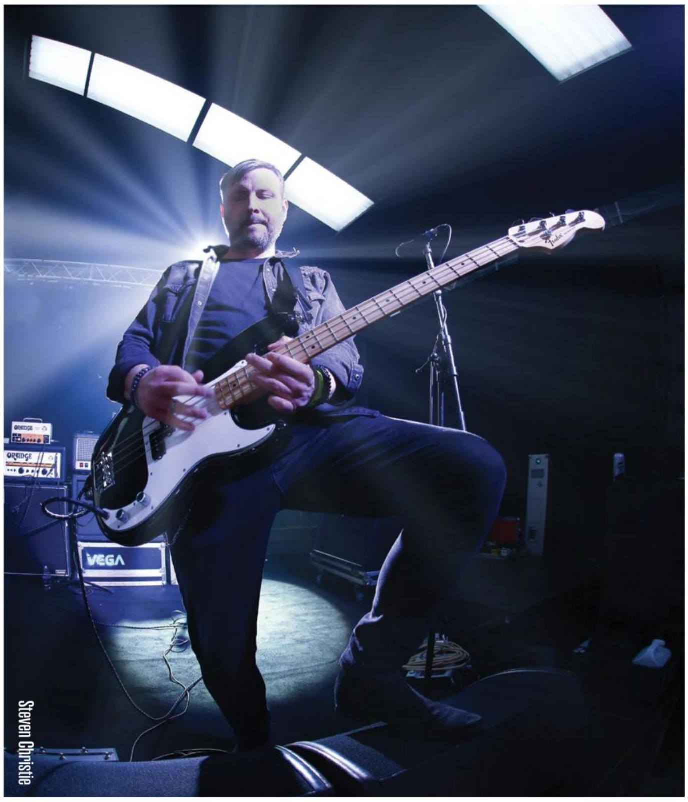
What bass gear do you currently use?
I currently use a black Precision Standard with an Ampeg Portaflex 500w head and Ampeg SVT 410 HE cab.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
Always play for a song. Sometimes not noticing the bass player means you're doing a good job.

Which bass player do you most admire?
Paul Webb from Talk Talk – he just has it all. He can play anything. Listen to 'It's My Life' or 'Living In Another World' – melodic yet technical.

Where can we hear you play?
We have a new album out, Grit Your Teeth. If you like classic rock with a modern twist then this could be your cuppa tea. We'll be playing the Monsterfest in November and we'll be doing a UK tour in the spring and summer of 2021.

www.vegaofficial.co.uk



Steven Christie

STEVEN BLANCO

IMPERIAL TRIUMPHANT

What was your way into bass?
I started as a drummer in my early teens, and naturally loved the bass, rhythm, and grooving. I had an Ibanez SGR bass as a teenager, but didn't really start playing seriously until years later, after becoming a jazz piano player. As a piano player, the bass automatically becomes a huge part of your world, with the left hand determining the harmonic role of right-hand chords. My first bass was an Ibanez SGR 300 in metallic red. A fine instrument. I've played Fender, G&L, Aria, ESP and Ibanez basses since then. Many have come and gone – as is the way of the musician's financial existence.

What bass gear do you currently use?
My mains are a Jazz bass that has been heavily modded and refinished in gold leaf because I can't stop tinkering, and a vintage Ario Pro II SB RSZ. The Orange Terror Bass 500 is one of my favourite amps out there. I have a ton of pedals that I use with bass for all that extra fun. I love Optima 24k Gold strings.

What's the best advice you've ever been given about playing bass?
Get into the low end, but don't be afraid to play melodically as well.

Which bass player do you most admire?
Obviously there are many, but I would have to say Geddy Lee because his creativity inspired me from very early on. I was drawn to his role in Rush, his diversity as a player, fantastic bass-lines and songwriting, and his sound. He found one of the greatest bass sounds; plenty of top end, but with rich deep lows that were always crushing live.

Where can we hear you play?
I tour most with my band Imperial Triumphant; our new album Alphaville is coming out this summer on Century Media. I also play in Ron Anderson's PAK and on the album Beastial, and with my own local NYC project El Chico Blanco. Hopefully there will be much more as we climb out of a challenging global situation.

www.steveblanco.com

STAR BASS

Each month we celebrate the great— and rather less great! — work of an acclaimed bass player. This month: Ryan Madora

Words: Joel McIver Image: Anna Haas

Nashville-based composer, educator, author, and stage and session bassist Ryan Madora started her musical career as a drummer. As she tells us, "In my freshman year I quit, because I didn't want to play drums any more. I was trying to figure out what else to do, and I always listened to a lot of soul, R&B and Motown stuff where the bass was pretty heavy, so I was like, 'I want to play that'.

"At the time I was also listening to a lot of Nirvana and Chili Peppers and a lot of rock music, and the thing that I was really impressed by was the bass. I convinced my dad to go halfies with me on buying a bass, and the rest is history." In between touring with Robben Ford and recording with many other projects, Madora released her first book, *Bass Players To Know: Learning From The Greats*, in 2019. She debuts an essential new instructional column in *Bass Player*'s next issue.

MUST-HAVE ALBUM

Robben Ford

Purple House (2018)

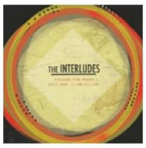
"One of the cool things about this album is that Robben decided to make it based on songs, and with Nashville players who were used to playing on songs, as part of his band. The direction was less about jazz and more in the traditional song form, with the songs written specifically for our band. We developed the parts out on the road: there are a handful of tunes such as 'Tangle With Ya', 'Bound For Glory' and 'Somebody's Fool' that we had played while touring. That meant that when we went into the studio, we already had a game plan for what we were doing, and we were feeling really comfortable with the songs. The drummer is a really good friend of mine, so there are synchronous hits that we'll do together and then give each other a smile, knowing that both our minds were in the same place at that point. Most of this album was recorded with P-Basses, as far as I recall."

WORTHY CONTENDER

Kyshona Armstrong

Listen (2020)

"Kyshona is a singer-songwriter and very soulful in a kind of Mavis Staples-meets-Brittany Howard way. Her record is very timely in that it addresses a lot of the issues that are bubbling to the surface in today's social climate, and the songs are very consciously written to draw attention to what's going on in the world. She has an amazingly soulful voice and a great groove. 'Marching On' has a cool bass part that anchors the song with a minor pentatonic groove, and on the song 'Listen' I got to use my favourite Aguilar pedal combo – an Octamizer, Filter Twin and Agro – to create the bass tone. The rhythm section sits together really nicely. I'll usually bring a few different basses to a session, including a couple of five-strings in case I need to go low. I also have a D'Angelico hollowbody for the upright range."



COOL GROOVES

The Interludes

The Interludes (2015)

"This is my instrumental trio, and the cool thing about this record is that we recorded it almost as if it were a live album. We take inspiration from Booker T & The MGs and the Meters, so we wanted to track everything in one day, and all the solos were recorded live. Overdubs were done there on the spot, so it had the feeling of people playing right there in the room. I used a Mike Lull and a Fender Frankenstein that has an '83 neck and an '85 body and flatwound strings. It was the first album that I produced, so I learned a lot in the process, and there are some things I would do differently, but in general I'm pretty good with it as a first effort. I think of it as music that you would like to listen to while cooking, in the sense that it's very pleasant background music that you can choose to pay attention to."

WILD CARD

Amber Rubarth

Wildflowers In The Graveyard (2017)

"Amber is a phenomenal singer-songwriter, very organic and earthy in her approach, and what was interesting about this record is that we recorded it using Verdi's A, which is tuned to 432 Hz. Whereas an A note is usually tuned to 440 Hz, there's also a theory that music is more enjoyable and resonates more with nature and humanity if A is at 432 Hz. You tune everything slightly flat accordingly. There's a song I really like called 'Best I Can', which has lovely melodies and some use of chord inversions. Some people make records this way and they sound really great. For me, it's a challenge, because my ear thinks that everything I'm playing is flat, after this many years of playing bass. There's something about it that feels off, but the reason why people choose to do is because the offness is supposed to be better for listening to music..."

AVOID AT ALL COSTS

Lamont Dozier

Reimagination (2018)

"Lamont Dozier is the composer of so many classic Motown songs that it was an honour to play on this album, which is a collection of re-recordings of his old compositions. The record is quite beautiful, but if you listen to it as someone who loves bass and the lineage of Motown bass playing, you won't get a lot of it. Not much bass was recorded, and most of the tunes don't have bass on them. The cool thing about the album is that it highlights the songs themselves, but the unfortunate thing is that we bass players are so appreciative of what James Jamerson brought to the songs, and you don't get a lot of that on this album because the songs are mostly acoustic guitar or piano driven. The song I'm on is 'You Keep Me Hanging On' and I was able to do a Jamerson-style line, or at least as much as I was allowed to do. It was still a huge honour, though – I should make that clear."

Life is good
Vigier

DEEP THOUGHT

Words: Joel McIver Photos: Getty

Deep Purple are the last hard-rock band of their generation still on the road, pandemics permitting – and they've still got some miles to cover, says Roger Glover. Listen up as he reveals how Purple came up with their excellent new album, the bass gear that makes the big noises – and the secret of staying motivated after five decades and counting

Consider some numbers. It's 52 years since Deep Purple formed, 51 since Roger Glover joined their so-called Mark II line-up, a cumulative 40 that he's been in the band, 18 since the current line-up, Mark VIII, formed, and four years since they were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. They're about to release their 20th studio album – named *Whoosh!* for reasons which we'll get into in a minute – and in doing so will add to the 100 million albums they've sold. Yes... 100 million.

Before the live concert industry was temporarily erased by coronovirus, Purple were planning to continue their Long Goodbye Tour, a jaunt which they've been on since 2017, more or less.

Added up, these are massive figures, culturally and numerically. There's no wonder that Glover is on chirpy form when I call him at home in Switzerland about Purple's new album. Is he all right, I ask?

"Apparently, yes I am! I've checked the whole body and everything's working. Still kicking..." he replies. "I feel very lucky, I have to say. I live in the countryside, with lots of fresh air, but I really feel for people living in apartments and high-rises, with lots of kids in two rooms. I can't imagine the tension. Fortunately, the rate of coronavirus infection is incredibly low throughout Switzerland."

Have Deep Purple managed to escape the dreaded virus, then? "Yes. I've known a couple of people who've had it and recovered, but not in the band," he says. "We're all very careful, and isolating, but we're out of work for a year, basically. More to the point, so is the crew, who we're trying to help. It's a problem for everyone, so we're not alone. We're better placed than some and not as well placed as others. That's the way it is. You have to accept the cards you've been given."

Presumably there won't be any Long Goodbye tour dates in 2020, then? "No, this year's gone. All the touring we were going to do this summer is going to be shifted to the summer of 2021. I don't know dates yet, but I don't think there's anything until then, unless we get together and have a bit of fun."

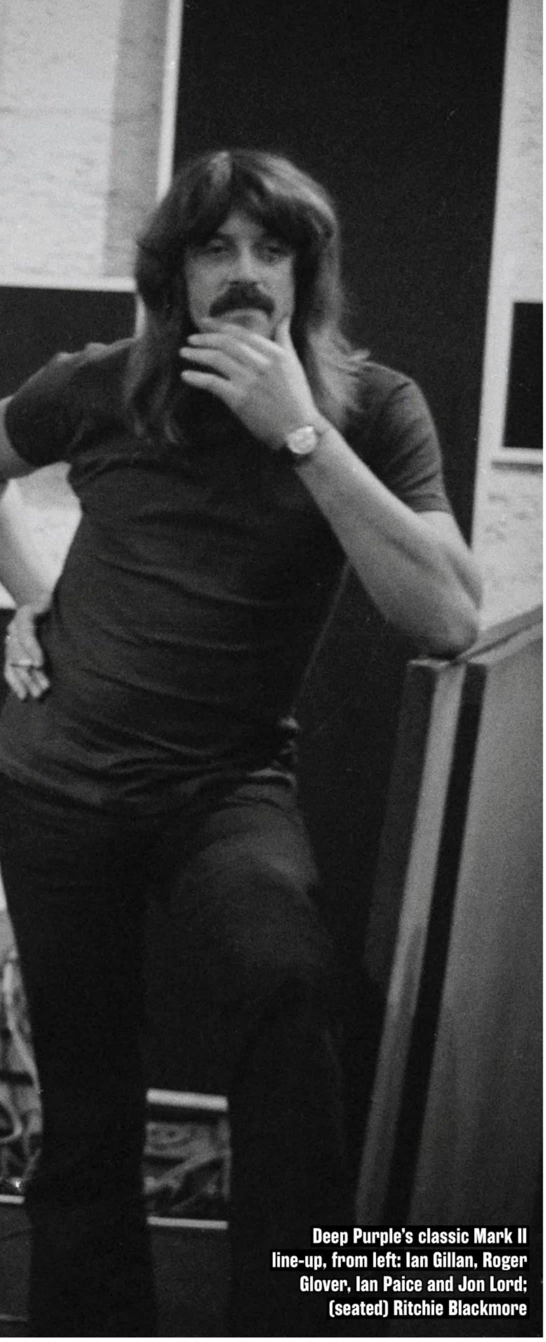
Deep Purple – Glover plus singer Ian Gillan, guitarist Steve Morse, organist Don Airey and drummer (and sole remaining Mark I member) Ian Paice – are a widely distributed band, making online sessions an obvious option in lockdown. However, an all-Purps Zoom jam isn't on the cards, says Glover. "We're five individuals stretched out around the world, and it's difficult to co-ordinate," he explains. "I wanted to do an online jam session, or something like that, but that was voted down because of latency or some other issue. Paicey's doing a thing on Youtube called Drumtribe, though, which is interesting – it's an insight into how we work."

Have a look – it's an insight into Purple at work in the studio, not a common sight by any means. "I remember in the old days the management or record company weren't allowed in the studio when we were making music," says Glover. "There was a dividing line between business and music. We did the music, they did the business. That's pretty much the way it's been. We're not secretive in the studio, exactly, but we don't invite people in for a party, either. Paicey had cameras all over the place, for what reason we didn't know at the time, so what you see of us in the recording, doing the actual takes, is new."

Whoosh! is a great album, we tell him. "Well, thank you very much, thank you. One never knows, you know – there's no round of applause at the end of an album," he chuckles. Informed that the music sounds both fresh and optimistic, he explains: "Yes it does, although there's a hint of something. People have pointed out that there's an atmosphere over the album that almost predicts this situation. Some of the songs are about mankind, and how time is passing; how we're only on this earth, if we're lucky, for 80 or 90 years, and then it's gone. A lifetime is just a speck in time, in cosmic terms.

"WE'RE ONLY ON THIS EARTH, IF WE'RE LUCKY, FOR 80 OR 90 YEARS..."

"I suppose time became one of those themes, because this may be our last album," he ponders. "Every album we do could be our last album, at this stage, but there was a feeling about this one... Essentially what we do is we have a couple of songwriting sessions before we go into the studio. The first session is just jamming ideas, and we end up with 15 or 20 bits and pieces. We listen to them and take the ones that stand out, and hammer them into shape in the second session. Our producer Bob Ezrin helps there, and listens to what we've done."



Deep Purple's classic Mark II line-up, from left: Ian Gillan, Roger Glover, Ian Paice and Jon Lord; (seated) Ritchie Blackmore

And does Ezrin always spot the potential hits? "Well, for one of the songs on the album, I have the note that he wrote, which says 'I don't know where this is going... Forget this one', ha ha! But we wouldn't forget it. He said 'Do you really think this works?' and we said 'Yes, it's a great piece of keyboard riffing and we like it', so we did it and it turned into one of my favourite tracks. "

How much of a 'producer' is Ezrin in the sense of demanding multiple takes from Glover? Does he need a few attempts to lay down the bass, or is it mostly nailed in a single take? "Oh, I do it first time," he nods. "When Bob first came to see us in Toronto eight or nine years ago, what he liked about us was the musicianship and the spontaneity. He said 'When you play together, there's a magic there that is vibrant and live and loose' and he's always tried to capture that in the studio.

"We'll rehearse with him for a week before we actually go in the studio, so when we do start recording we don't need more than one or two takes, playing live all together. If it doesn't work after two takes, we won't do it again. I might go in and repair a note here and there, but very rarely will I re-record a whole part, because it's about the feel, not the precision. At that point we've got a bunch of backing tracks with very few, or even no, ideas for vocals. Ian [Gillan] is there all the time, listening and making notes, and then he and I have a writing session all of our own. We went to an AirBnB place in Nashville and spent a week, hammering out ideas and looking for words and themes. That's always been our modus operandi. Then we had a two-week recording session for the vocals in Toronto, and I'm there if I'm needed."

Glover is a long-time user of Vigier basses, after spending his earlier career playing a variety of Fenders, Rickenbackers, Gibsons and even a Steinberger in and out of Purple and Rainbow. The latter band was formed by ex-Purple guitarist Ritchie Blackmore, and Glover played with them from 1979 to 1984 while Purple were inactive. (We should also note that he's a prolific producer, solo artist and guest musician, but if we go too deep into that we'll take up the entire magazine.)

Asked about his basses of choice, he explains: "I've used Vigier basses for 27 years now, I think. They're very reliable and easy to play, but when we did [Purple's 2013 album] *Now What?!*, on the first day Bob suggested 'The Vigier's nice and all that, but you should try my bass'. He brought it out, opened the case and there's this sort of battered old Fender Precision there. I picked it up and the strings were as dead as doornails. I said 'I dunno... I like my Vigier, but yeah, I'll give it a try. Let's change the strings'. He said 'No, no! Don't change the strings, that's a legendary bass, it's been on albums by Pink Floyd and Peter Gabriel and Alice Cooper and everyone. Tony Levin's played it, you know'.

"I'm a big fan of Tony Levin, so I thought 'I'll try it anyway' and he was right, it records beautifully. It has a universal feel up and down the neck. It doesn't disappear when you go high, or anything like that, it's really a very nice guitar. In fact, I was so impressed with Bob's that I went out and bought one in Nashville. I tried half a dozen vintage P-Basses, all of which were going for $6000 or $7000, and I wasn't impressed. They were a bit floppy in the bottom end and I was about to give up, but then the guy said 'Try this one' and gave me another Precision. Bright pink, like a salmon, and I said 'How much is that?' It turned out to be a $300 Squier, and it is brilliant. I was knocked out, it's so lovely. When I play a bass at home, that's usually the one that I pick up."

P-Basses are close to Glover's heart, it emerges. You remember that bass you had as a kid that you later lost? You'll like this story. "I started on a Precision, years and years ago, and unfortunately

I sold it – I wish I'd kept it," he says. "I was offered it back in the Rainbow days, after I mentioned in an article that I wished I'd kept my Precision. Some guy left a message when we were playing the Hammersmith Apollo, a little written message saying 'I've got your guitar' and a phone number.

"I went to see him the next morning, and at first I wasn't sure it was actually mine, because it didn't feel like mine; it felt very lightweight and it was covered in horrible purple paint – just painted on, not even sprayed. He pointed to a mod that I'd done to it – there was a hole from a screw that I'd put in – so it was definitely my bass, but he wanted too much money for it, so I let it go. It didn't feel right in my hands, somehow."

So does a P-Bass appear on the new album? "Yes, I played a Precision on most of the tracks. I only use the Vigier when I need to move higher, because it's slightly easier to play, but I do love the Precision. For the stage, I'll stick with my Vigier; a Precision sounds meatier in the studio, while the Vigier sounds more precise, with more of a modern bass sound."

Glover is a four-string bassist to the core, he says. "I would never go to five. I once got up with a band for a jam session and the guy had a five-string. I said 'I'll give it a go' but oh, I made a mess of it. I hit the B when I wanted to hit the E. I thought 'Why bother to learn how to play this? I'm still learning to play a four-string'."

Perhaps a five might be useful for any of Purple's songs that have tuned lower over the years, we suggest. "Some of the older songs that we play, the classics, they go down a tone," he concedes, "because we were in our twenties when Ian started singing those songs, and at 75 it's a little more difficult to do that. I've thought about getting a five-string for recording purposes, just to get a low D, instead of dropping the E string to a D, because that confuses me. I'm easily confused."

Me too, I say. You forget that the string has gone down to D. "Especially when you're on stage!" he laughs. "You don't notice that you're doing it, and you wonder why everyone's looking at you, thinking 'What are you doing?'

Glover's amps are TC Electronic, he explains. "I got turned on to them a few years ago. Their gear blew me away, it was so tight and round. If you can imagine a sound being a circle, it was that. It was perfect, and I use half the amount of speakers that I used to use, and it's more powerful. We don't use in-ears or monitors – we have side fills and that's it. I tried in-ears for two weeks, but they frustrated me. Every time I wanted to hear something I had to rip them out, so it didn't really work for me. I really want the feel of the power, and there's only one way to get that, and that's to go deaf, you know."

With his signature bass: "For the stage, I'll stick to my Vigier."

"I WOULD NEVER GO TO FIVE STRINGS. I'M STILL LEARNING TO PLAY FOUR"

How are the Glover ears holding up at the age of 74, we inquire? "Well, age plays as much of a part in loss of hearing as being in a rock band does – probably more so, actually. My ears have been pretty good, although I haven't measured them lately. There's some damage, but they're not bad."

Presumably several decades of standing next to a world-famous power drummer doesn't help? "You say Paicey's a power drummer, but he's not what you'd think a normal hard rock power drummer is. He doesn't hit the things that hard, he hits them right, so they really resound. I've played with drummers who were much, much louder and raucous than him, and I don't like that; there are no dynamics involved. His playing is much more nuanced, and you can't be nuanced if you're hitting them as hard as you can."

How does it work with Vigier, we ask – do they send Glover a bass on request? "Yes, when I ask for one. If I say 'Hey Patrice [Vigier, company owner], can you send me a fretless?', he does. But I don't bother him that much."

He doesn't say, 'I need 20 new basses, please?' like the rest of us would? "I would never do that. I've got enough basses as it is. I don't know what to do with them. It's

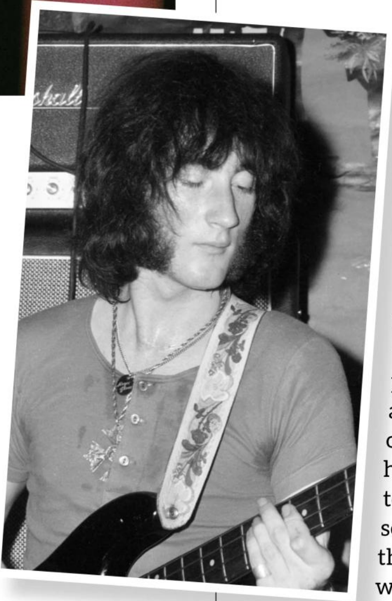
not a bad problem to have, I know, and it's not so much the guitars, it's the cases. Where do you put the cases? They take up so much room."

Does he still have the Rickenbackers from the old days? "I've got one Rickenbacker, the main 'Smoke On The Water' one. I've given it to my daughter. I've still got the Fender Mustang that I used on *Fireball* [1971], the Gibson Thunderbird that I used with Rainbow... I've got quite a few. People have made me basses, with my initials in the paint, which is very nice of them, but I don't really want to play a bass with my name on it. I don't like wearing T-shirts with Deep Purple written on them either.

"The last time I did that was many years ago," he says in amusement, "when I was living in Connecticut. I woke up one Sunday morning with no milk for tea, so I threw on jeans and a T-shirt and I went over to the local shop, still unshaven and half-asleep. I shuffled in the queue up to the cashier and the guy behind me said, 'Hey! Deep Purple!' I thought 'Oh God, I've been recognised' because I didn't realise that my shirt said 'Deep Purple' on the back. Before I could turn around and say 'Hi' or shake his hand, he said, 'Ah, they're not as good as they used to be'."

What's the internal power structure in Deep Purple, we ask, perhaps a tad impertinently, now we come to think of it. Is there a band leader? "There's no leader as such," he says. "It's very democratic, so we reach decisions just by talking to each other. I don't think there ever was a leader, although some people may differ about that."

In the early days, Ritchie Blackmore seemed to be a little more, shall we say, forceful than the rest of Purple. "Well, it was a democracy, but Ritchie came out as the driving force of the direction of the band, not that he actually *was* the leader of the band. Since then we've always shied away from having a leader. Jon Lord was the acknowledged leader in the early days, because he could talk nice. He went to drama school and he had a good voice."



We're glad Glover has mentioned the fantastic Jon Lord – organist, raconteur, musical genius, Purple founder member – who died of cancer in 2012. I met him and liked him (buy me a pint sometime and I'll tell you about it) and he occupies a special place in many people's hearts, not least that of his friend Roger.

"He lives in me," says Glover, sadly. "He was a wonderful man, and I miss him. Every time that I listen to something that he played on, I think how great it is. He taught me a lot. One of those things was 'When I'm doing a solo, I'm not going to do multiple takes of it. If I don't get it the first time, I might get it a second time, but after that, that's it – I'm not going to fiddle with it. He was purely spontaneous; he didn't learn bits to put in. That wasn't his style at all – he was a real jazz player in that respect. Some of the very recognisable solos he did – in 'Fireball', for instance – were off the cuff, not worked out. That was who he was."

One last thing. Every time we meet Glover in this magazine, he tells us that he's a simple bass player who likes playing simple bass parts. We always nod politely and then listen to the new Purple album, only to come across a bass part that is definitely complex. What gives?

"Well," he considers, "I happen to be in a band that's got something going on about it, and that has a drummer who is brilliant, one of a kind. Paicey said to me at our first or second rehearsal back in 1969, 'By the way, I don't follow, I lead'. And I thought 'Okay. I know my place'. And actually that's quite right – I couldn't possibly influence Paicey. He's a machine, all to himself, so I have to tuck in with him. I'm not the virtuoso bass player that some people expect. I'm a simple bass player, and sometimes I'm a little embarrassed about that, that people think I'm so great but I really don't."

What's the plan now, Roger? Back on the road when circumstances permit? "I want to resume as soon as possible. At our age, we don't know how long we're going to last anyway," he says, semi-flippantly. "One of the big secrets of life is that when you're a child and a teenager, everything is new. Everything is an exciting experience. The first time you go to Paris; the first time you do this or that. Then you get to about 40, and you've done it all. There are very few surprises left, unless of course you try and surprise yourself. That's what growing old is all about, and the great thing about musicians is that that doesn't happen, because there's always something new when you're a creative person. You can't stop writing and expressing what you think, or words or music or whatever it may be, it's fresh again."

There's hope for us all, then. Is there anywhere that Glover hasn't yet been? "The North Pole. No, I don't really want to go there," he chuckles. "We've been lucky enough to go around the world several times and go to all sorts of places. I find it hard to take in, sometimes: I think to myself, 'How the hell did I get here?'"

Whoosh! will be released on 7th August.
Info: https://deep-purple.com

GOOD TIMES

Who would dare fill the shoes of the great, departed Bernard Edwards? Only a bassist with years of experience and a bass philosophy all of his own... Say hello to the mighty Jerry Barnes

Tap into YouTube and a song called 'Sugar Free' by Juicy, the duo of bassist Jerry Barnes and his late sister Katreese, an award-winning performer and composer known for her work on *Saturday Night Live* and elsewhere. This song, a hit in 1985, was the first real emergence into the limelight for the siblings; Jerry went on to perform as a session and stage musician with a huge list of stars – Roberta Flack, Carly Simon, Chaka Khan, Bette Midler and Harry Belafonte among them.

Nowadays, Barnes holds down the bass in the modern incarnation of Chic, the band most responsible in the 70s for making disco music a global phenomenon. Based on the twin talents of guitarist Nile Rodgers and bassist Bernard Edwards, Chic foundered in 1996 after the untimely death of Edwards at the age of only 43.

Any bassist coming into this band after Edwards would find it a challenge. Those world-famous bass parts, groovy and catchy beyond all reasonable explanation, manage to be both simple and fiendishly complex at the same time – as anyone who has tried to play 'Good Times', 'Everybody Dance' or 'Le Freak' will confirm.

Barnes pulls it off, though, night after night. Let's find out how...

How did you first connect with Nile Rodgers, Jerry?

I went to see Bernard and Nile play in New York City right before they went on the Japan tour in 1996, where Bernard passed away. I had never seen Chic live, and I was sitting there staring at Bernard while he played, although I couldn't figure out what his hands were doing. Towards the end of the following year, a friend of mine told me that Nile was looking for a bass player and that I'd be perfect for the job. Katreese and I auditioned for two minutes before Nile said 'Okay, are you guys available?' It was really funny, because we immediately started playing like we were the band. In hindsight it was one of the more serendipitous moments of my life: I didn't think of it as an audition, I just thought of it as 'I know I can do this gig'.

Did you try to emulate Bernard's technique?

Not at first. I played a lot of things differently than Bernard in terms of hand positioning, and right- and left-hand techniques. I had my own way of interpreting his parts, until about 12 years into playing with Nile, I went on YouTube and found *American Bandstand* footage of Chic. I was watching how Bernard played 'Everybody Dance', and he had his left hand in first position. I always played the C on the E string on the eighth fret, so I'd made it harder for myself! After seeing Bernard do it, I started playing it in his hand position. I discover things that I don't do like him – obviously, because I'm not him – all the time, and when I listen to the records, I realise that I've morphed my version of what he created. Last year, on the section where Bernard plays a little ghost note on 'Freak Out', I started doing it, and me and Nile just grinned ear to ear, like 'Now we're sounding just like the record'.

Getty

It sounds as though there is no pressure on you to play exactly like Bernard did.

You know, if we're giving it 100 percent, the little nuances are not as important, I think, because the main bass-lines are obviously there. There have been times where Nile has asked me to play something a certain way, because the guitar, drums and bass on those records are married in a very specific way. I've only gotten carried away a few times, when I just went crazy, but I normally don't do that. If your ego gets in the way of the music, you're not doing the right thing – you're

Nile Rodgers and Jerry Barnes, delivering the grooves like no other act on the planet

not honouring the gig or the music or the artist. If you're doing your own music, do what you want, but if you're playing other people's music, particularly pop music with parts that people have been used to hearing, you've got to stay in the ballpark.

Do you use Bernard's 'chucking' technique, where he used his fingernail as a pick?
I use it all the time, but not like him, because I'm trying to keep from bleeding. It does hurt, and I'd say you have to do it all the time, to build up some callouses. You will literally break your fingernail if you do it like Bernard. I do it at one particular spot in every show, but not like him; I do it more like a mute with the right hand. He did the chuck very loosely, like a rhythm guitar player, which he was before he was a bass player, as you know. You have to realise, Bernard did this effortlessly, he was chucking with his finger and thumping, all in the same motion. He didn't think about it, which is one of the genius discoveries of his natural technique.

We thought the pairing of Chic with Cher on tour in 2019 was a masterstroke.
Chic and Cher was a tour that I never could have imagined, when you think about your life and the gigs you do, and the bands you play with. Live Nation told us that after the audiences heard how great the show was, we were getting 80 percent capacity at the beginning of the show. It was the first time in their recorded history that they would get 80 percent of the house in their seats at the beginning of the show. We started early, around 7.30pm, played a 55 to 60-minute set, and then Cher was on by 9pm.

All due respect to Cher, because following a band like Chic is quite a feat.
Well, the truth was that we had to win the audience over, because she was the legend. People told each other, 'You've got to go hear this, it's really fun'. Certain artists are bigger than their catalogue of work, and Cher is one of those. In our case, and Nile and I have talked about this, Chic's songs are bigger than the band. Only our fans know us, but everyone knows the songs.

All credit to Nile, he always features us and is proud of his band, so now I think people know Nile as the guitar player, me as the bassist, Ralph Rolle as the drummer and Russell Graham as the keyboard player.

How did you get started as a bass player?
I got started on bass to be able to play with my sister, Katreese. My father always managed bands and had equipment around – guitars, basses, drums. When I was 15, I got a Mel Bay beginner's bass book from the local music store and I started practising. My sister always said that it sounded like I could play bass from the beginning. I think the first bass-line that I learned was Steve Martin's 'King Tut'. We had a little band and we played it at a school talent show. After that we started playing Top 40 gigs. We opened for Cameo, SOS, the Bar-Kays and all these other bands that were coming through the South.

What was your first professional bass?
I still have it under my bed. It was a very heavy Kramer with an aluminium neck. My dad took me to a music store when he realised that I was serious about playing music, and said 'Pick whatever

"IT SOUNDED LIKE I COULD PLAY BASS FROM THE BEGINNING"

Getty

one you want'. I thought 'Oh my God, there's hundreds of basses' and I picked the Kramer for the looks. I didn't realise that it didn't sound like any of the records that I loved, but I didn't understand that at the time. I learned the hard way, because I struggled with that bass for a long time. One day I dropped it and the neck broke, and I'd seen Gary Grainger play a Fender and it hit me that I needed a Fender too for the right sound. In the early 80s, when we were recording our first album, we borrowed a Jazz bass, and that was when I realised that a Fender was the sound of Larry Graham and Marcus Miller.

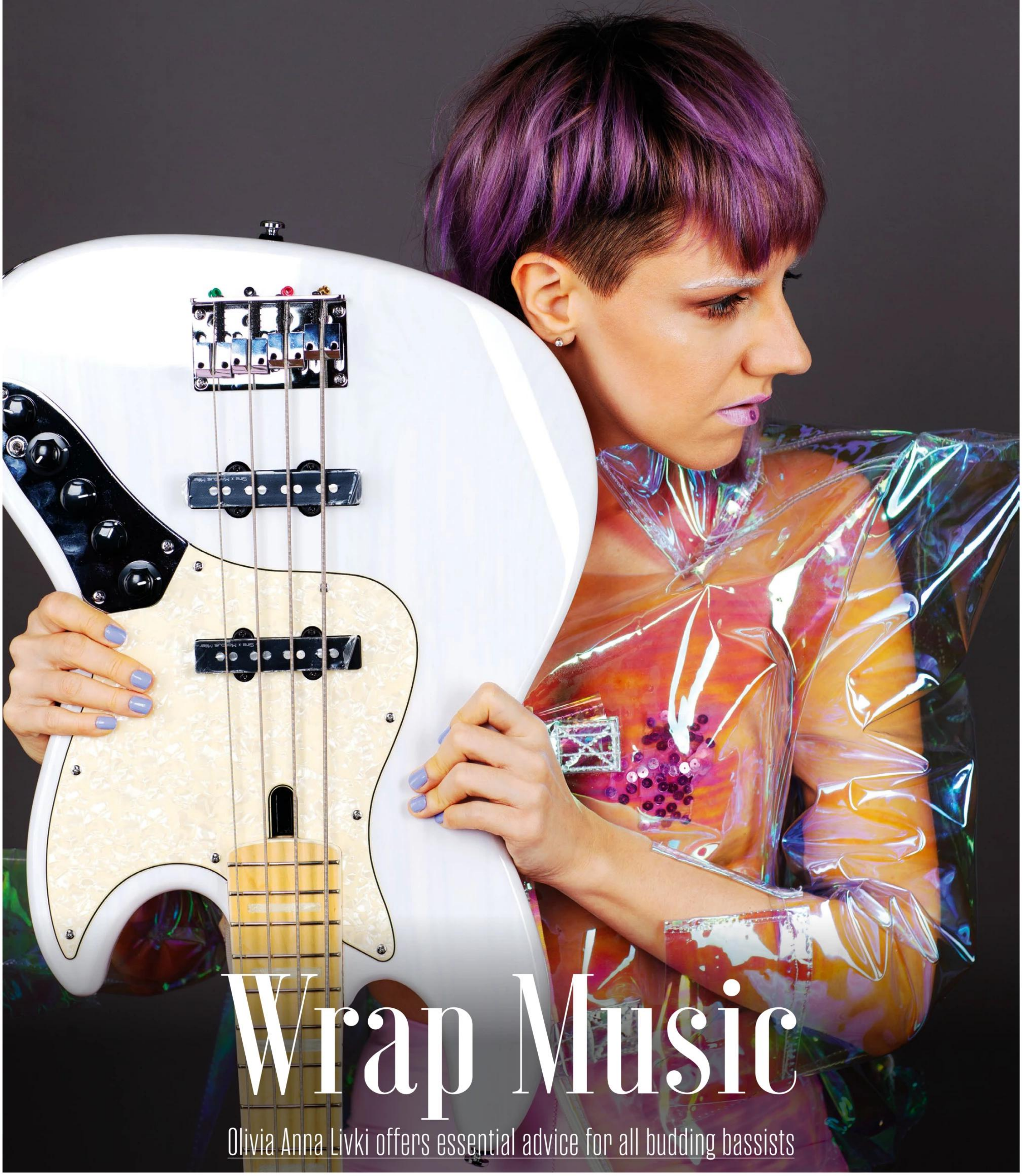
Which bass players did you admire when you were starting out?
My biggest influences were Nathaniel Phillips from Pleasure, Robert Wilson from the Gap Band, and Louis Johnson. Larry Graham too, of course. It was a time when you could have an identity as a musician in pop music. Of course, all of the funk players that I loved were influenced by James Jamerson.

We loved your signature Atelier Z bass. Tell us how it came about.
That bass was 25 years in the making. When I first started playing with Nile, I played a bass made by Mas Hino, whose father is the famous trumpet player Terumasa Hino, and when he went to work for Atelier Z in Japan around 20 years ago, we talked about doing a Jerry Barnes bass. It's basically a Fender Jazz, with the specs that I like on it. The key was to try to use swamp ash and keep it light, which is very difficult to do because of the availability of the wood. Mas now has his own shop in New York, where he makes basses for La Bella called Olinto, as well as his own guitars and basses. He's an incredible luthier. So we had years of talking about it, and Atelier Z are like the Sadowsky of Japan. I have the original prototype, which is really heavy, almost 12 pounds, but the one I use for Chic is eight pounds. I also have a five-string version, which sounds great.

In-ears or monitors?
I don't use in-ears; I was so happy when I saw Lee Sklar with Phil Collins and he didn't use in-ears either. I would argue that you risk ear damage with in-ears more than you do without them. I will turn down my monitor if it gets too loud, but I can get through any show as long as I can hear the drums acoustically.

What other gear do you use?
I use Aguilar amps; I've been with them for a long time. I use D'Addario strings, and straps made by Marieke Hartmann-Evers, which can handle how much I sweat. On stage, I sweat like I've come out of a sauna, and the dye used to come out of the straps onto my shirts. It was crazy!

Info: http://jerrybarnes.com



Wrap Music

Olivia Anna Livki offers essential advice for all budding bassists

I was about 14 or 15 years old when I started playing bass. I heard 'Come Together' by the Beatles for the first time. That was basically when I decided that I wanted to play the instrument. My first bass guitar was a small, not too heavy Yamaha TRBX in turquoise. Since then, I've mostly played my Fender Jazz, because I'm looking for a very specific, guitar-like punk rock sound, with gritty, warm and powerful low-mids. I've put a lot of effort into putting together the perfect kit, which is a combination of a Warwick WCA 410 cabinet, a Gallien-Krueger MB Fusion head and my Jazz bass.

The best advice I've ever been given about playing bass is that random technical practice, and basically keeping your fingers on the instrument – even while you're watching TV – is the best way to evolve. My bass teacher used to say that. It's not always about fancy new practice techniques or playing complicated tunes, although you should certainly challenge yourself by trying new things that you've never played before. Keep your fingers working the strings regularly – that's the best way to evolve in the long term.

Naming the greatest bass player ever is a tricky one. Music isn't a sport to me, so I think it's hard to compare great bass players; they're all unique in their own categories. If I had to pick someone, it would be John Entwistle. He reinvented the role of the bass and the bass player in rock-music by becoming a solo guitarist and guitar hero in the Who. He was just as present in that band as Pete Townshend was, really. I guess my punk guitar approach to bass is influenced by him, too.

Olivia Anna Livki's album Digital Dissidents is out now.
Info: www.oliviaannalivki.com

MOMENTARY DECISIONS

The great Michael Manring returns with a new album, *Small Moments*, and explains the far-reaching philosophy beneath the music

I've always loved the idea that being an artist is all about observing what's happening in the society around you and responding in some meaningful way. I get the feeling this notion went out of style in the tumult of the 20th century and art became a kind of anything goes proposition, but I just can't seem to let go of it. I have the privilege of travelling a good bit, seeing some interesting parts of the world and meeting lots of people. I'm not sure if I have any special perspective, but I always look for themes and patterns around me and those ideas motivate me in the creative process.

From what I can see, life in the early part of this still new century is increasingly technological and globally inter-connected, complex and full of both possibilities and problems. It continues to be a time of dramatic new conceptions in physics, information and philosophy of mind with remarkable implications for epistemology and society. I find these ideas recur in my thoughts and compositions as I try to make sense of the world around me, and they are reflected in *Small Moments*.

Let me introduce some of my bass guitars to you. First, the Zon Michael Manring Fretless Hyperbass: I've had this bass since 1990 and it has been a dream come true. For many years I had wanted to experiment with bass design in some specific ways, but it was difficult to find a luthier willing to undertake some of the bizarre concepts I had in mind. I had the great fortune to meet Joe Zon in the late 80s, and he and I have been collaborating ever since. For the Hyperbass, we decided to try out a whole set of unusual ideas on one instrument and see what happened. It has several unusual features. First, it has a very long fingerboard – just shy of three octaves. We did this because we couldn't see a reason not to. With a fretless instrument, it seemed to make sense to extend the fingerboard as far as possible – in this case to the sole pickup.

We also included an unusual electronics arrangement in the Hyperbass. Underneath the standard pickup cover there are actually four separate elements, one for each string. This allows me to output the sound of each string separately and if you listen carefully to the pieces 'Tetrahedron' and '23 Oktober' you will hear each string has its own place in the stereo field. If you're really paying attention, you can hear separate audio processing for each string on these pieces as well. In addition to the four magnetic pickups, there are four ceramic pickups built into the body of this bass. One is in the top of the body, one in each horn and one in the headstock.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, we designed the Hyperbass for dynamic tuning. I've always been fascinated with the capability of the bass guitar for various tunings and have come to believe it may have more capacity for altered tuning than any other instrument. As I got into unusual tunings I realised a really exciting direction to go would be to be able to move through tunings while playing – what I refer to as 'dynamic tuning'. The Hyperbass has levers at both ends of the instrument to allow for this. The ones at the headstock give me the opportunity to change the tuning of each string separately; those at the bridge allow me to change tuning on groups of strings with a single lever move.

Then there's my Zon VB4: this fretted instrument was designed to replace a bass I got in Japan in the mid-80s. Although the strings and neck were the standard length, the body and headstock were minimised, making the instrument easier to travel with. Since I love experimenting with and sharing all the various sounds and colours the bass is capable of, I like to travel with as many basses as I can. This is not an easy proposition and much planning and worrying has gone into the process of transporting my instruments all over the world. Having a bass a bit smaller has been very helpful and allows me to travel with as many as three basses by myself. Joe built the first prototype VB4 in the 90s, and the one I'm currently using is an updated design built around 2004.

As for my Zon Legacy 10-string prototype: one day Joe brought a prototype 10-string bass to my house. He had been experimenting with special hardware for five two-string configurations and wanted me to check it out. The bass was strung with the string pairs in octaves, which is the standard, but I swapped them out with other gauges that allowed me to tune the pairs in many different ways. I was engrossed with this setup and have been having a wonderful time experimenting with this bass ever since.

Finally, the Zon Sonus Elite Special is my main bass – the one I use for almost every session and gig I do. It's a four-string fretless with the extended cutaway and dynamic tuning keys as on the Hyperbass. It's simply the finest instrument of any kind I've ever played. I'm astonished at Joe's skill in building instruments that are almost like living things with soul and passion. In fact, I sometimes feel my job is to simply get out of the way and just let these instruments sing.

The songs on *Small Moments* are solo bass pieces, recorded live with no overdubs and minimal editing. Although I use

"LIFE IS INCREASINGLY TECHNICAL AND GLOBALLY INTER-CONNECTED"

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electronics to expand and extend the sound of the instrument, almost all this processing was done on the fly during the performances. These pieces were written to be played live using only the equipment the airlines will allow me to take with me when I travel.

The basses were recorded direct using Markbass DI boxes plugged into the preamp of an old Soundcraft board, then sent to a MOTU 828 converter into Logic. In some cases, the VB-99 was plugged directly into the laptop using its on-board USB converter for the recording. In addition to the direct sound, for many of the pieces I used two Rode microphones very close to the instrument. I do this to pickup the acoustic, transient sound of the bass in my recording space as well as the sound of the Markbass amp I use for monitoring. I find this helps create a sense of acoustic ambience that otherwise can be missing in recording direct alone.

One of the songs, 'The World Is Everything That Is the Case', was recorded with the Zon Hyperbass, tuned CFB♭E♭, with Roland VB99 effects and an Ebow. This is a little improvisation I've been playing in my solo shows for the last several years. I suppose the sole drawback to the Ebow is it's really only designed to play one note at a time. If you're playing with others this isn't a big deal, but it is a little tricky to come up with interesting single line, monophonic solo music, so I've had fun over the years devising methods for creating more complete music with it.

> **"WITTGENSTEIN SOUGHT TO ORGANISE AND DESCRIBE THE WORLD"**

One of my favourite ways to do this is by using harmonisers. A harmoniser is an electronic effect that does just what it says – it generates a harmony to whatever you play. If you just switch it on and play, the effect is interesting, but can get a bit tiresome eventually. One of my passions, like dynamic tunings, is dynamic effects — using the power that new technology gives us in ways that are changeable and expressive. Thanks to the Roland VB-99 and the Keith McMillen SoftStep I'm able to work with the technology in ways I find inspiring and do it all live

in real time. In the case of this piece, I set up four harmonies to the note I'm playing. I programmed a patch so I can fade the harmonies in and out, change them, and sustain them as I wish. This is a sound environment I love to explore and I thought it would be a nice way to introduce this set of music.

Those of you who are philosophy nerds (I'm a wannabe!) may recognise the title as the first words in the 'Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus' by Ludwig Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein was one of the most important philosophical thinkers of the 20th century and certainly among the boldest. In the 'Tractatus' he sought to organise and describe the nature of the world in a unique, precise, almost mathematical framework. The result is somewhat mystifying, but I can't help but be moved by his audacity, intellectual depth and creative courage.

Another song, 'Tetrahedron' featured these temporary tunings, created pulling the key: CE♭B♭E♭, D♭FB♭E♭, A♭E♭B♭E♭, D♭FB♭F, CE♭B♭F, A♭E♭B♭F, D♭FA♭E♭, CE♭A♭E♭, A♭E♭A♭E♭, D♭FA♭F, CE♭A♭F, CFB♭F, B♭FB♭F, B♭FB♭E♭. B♭F#B♭E♭*, B♭E♭B♭E♭, B♭E♭B♭F, B♭FB♭F#. I never get tired of searching for new ideas to explore on my Hyperbass. Its dynamic tuning capability is especially inspiring and I love being able to make tuning changes part of the compositional process.

The tuning keys are made by a company called Hipshot, and a lever on the side allows me to move between two notes on each string. However, a few years ago, Hipshot came up with a design with an intermediate position allowing for three notes per string. Of course, I had to have them! They've been quite a mental adjustment, as with two positions on four strings there are 16 possible tuning configurations, but with the three position keys that number goes up to 81. I love the challenge though, and I'm pretty sure this piece has more tuning changes than anything else I've ever written.

A tetrahedron is a pyramid with a triangular base and this shape represents to me the tuning capabilities of the Hyperbass. The four faces are analogous to the four strings with the triangles corresponding to the three possible tuning positions of the Hipshots. I think of the bridge tuning mechanism as changing the size of the tetrahedron. I don't have synesthesia, but when I play this piece I sometimes like to picture a moving and changing tetrahedron dancing in space; I feel this image helps me to better visualise the various tuning possibilities of the Hyperbass.

I feel I owe a debt to my great literary hero, Jorge Luis Borges' wonderful story 'Death And The Compass' for this piece. In it he describes the 'Tetragrammaton', a concept in Judaism that has deep significance in the mystical tradition of Kabbalah. The idea is that the name of God is a word of four letters that has special power and must not be spoken aloud. The word comes from the Greek 'consisting of four letters'. As someone who spends his life searching for something meaningful and beautiful on four strings, I found this idea had a deep resonance with me...

Small Moments is out now: this article is excerpted from its extensive (and excellent) liner notes. Info: https://manthing.com.

Exigency

Jessica Elalouf of Exigent on the key wisdom that all bassists should have

Maintaining a groove is crucial for a bass player – I should be able to dance to what I'm playing – and locking in with the drummer is essential. In a band, you need to be able to be tight and in step with the drummer. Being fancy is fun, but timing, technique, and grooving is most important to me.

My very first bass was a Fender Squier Jazz. I still have it and use it for performances where I need to change tuning many times during our sets. I have a lot of good memories of that bass. It's made many trips to and from school for band practice. I'm very fond of it, it's very special to me.

I play an Ernie Ball Music Man Stingray through a Fender Rumble 500 these days – the bass is a Ray34 with a gorgeous mahogany body and a beautiful sound that I never get tired of. I love the feeling of it in my hands and hearing it when I play out with my band. I'm a fan of the C-shaped maple neck, the rosewood fretboard and the glossy finish. The neck is so smooth and very comfortable for my hands. I could pick up a five- or six-string bass, but I prefer to play four-strings simply because they're the most comfortable and familiar to me. I've played five strings before, but a four suits my hands better.

I'm endorsed by Ernie Ball and a member of the Brotherhood of the Guitar. The Brotherhood is made up of prestigious musicians from around the world. It was founded by Robert M. Knight, the world renowned photographer who has photographed all the rock gods. He was one of the first to photograph Jimi Hendrix. The Brotherhood is supported by Ernie Ball and Guitar Center.

Geddy Lee takes the title of world's best bassist for me. As a bassist and singer, it's astounding to me how he has such a mastery of the bass, vocals, and keys. I saw Rush live in high school and I was completely mesmerised. Even just singing background and playing bass can be hard work. Rush songs are also quite complex, with difficult bass-lines and odd time signatures. To take on all of that and perform it so well is just amazing, and I admire him so much for it.

I first felt that the bass was the instrument for me after taking guitar classes in high school for a couple of years. Just before senior year, I was a singer at our local School of Rock and wanted to play bass during a song at a show. I was given a bass tab to help me learn it, and I carried it around during school. My guitar teacher noticed that I was looking at the tab and asked if I wanted to be the bass player for the school band, since the bassist was graduating. That's when I began to play regularly. After I graduated, I started college and auditioned for the school band, initially as a vocalist. However, yet again, the bass player had graduated – so once again, I was the designated bass player. I guess destiny was calling!

Info: www.exigentband.com

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Pass Notes

Welcome to our new advice page, where a bassist of note gives us the tips we need to get to the top. This month: John Campbell, Lamb Of God

"We're losing work left and right," sighs Lamb Of God bassist John Campbell. "We had a four-week European run cancelled, and a festival in May, and things in June too. Obviously people's health is way more important than us playing some shows, but I'll be very ready to get back out once that time comes. I imagine that people who are sitting at home quarantined are going to be ready to hear some live music too!"

The small matter of the pandemic aside, Campbell and his band are on fine form. Their new album, a self-titled effort indicating that it's something of a career milestone, is a thoroughly enjoyable slab of riffage; we have no idea how Campbell, a pick player, keeps up with the intimidating picking speed of his guitarists Mark Morton and Willy Adler. There's also a new drummer, Art Cruz, of whom the bassist explains: "With Art playing, there's this insane energy coming from behind the kit. This kid is living his dream, because Lamb Of God has been his favourite band since he decided he wanted to play drums, even though playing drums in our band is like sprinting a marathon every night."

So what advice has Campbell got for us on the subject of bass?

Warm up, and then warm up again

At this point I'm mostly a pick player, although I'll play with my fingers when I'm just playing around at home or something. For what I do, I couldn't play that accurately without a pick, so for me, preparing my hands for a live show means a lot of slow going through riffs and just building the neural networks.

People ask how I play so fast, but I don't really know how I do it because I kinda made it up as I went along. For me, a heavily-scored pick just sits in my hand like it's nothing. I'm not saying that simple, Van Halen-style bass is boring, because there's little twists and tricks in there and that's cool, but maybe I'm too impatient to sit and ride that. It's like I'm thinking 'That's a cool riff, I want to play that riff too!'

I'm lucky enough that it's my job to play that way, and I invest a lot of time into it. It's really about the passion you have to spend the time, and burn through the times that are not fun, when you're playing the same thing over and over again, building up speed and still messing it up. You've got to still want that, and you've got to keep pushing yourself. I'm incredibly happy where I'm at, because we continue to put out our best work.

Accept that mistakes happen

Do I make mistakes? No, never. What are you talking about? Ha ha! No, of course I do, but that's part of being able to do this – being able to roll with the punches. You have to set it up so that you're punch-free when you get on stage or go to rehearse. You're not drinking, you're where you need to be and you're focused on the performance. But yeah, mistakes happen all the time. Early on in a tour, I'm definitely gonna spend an hour at least playing, sometimes playing chromatically up and down, just to get things right. Two or three weeks into a tour, if we're playing five nights a week, then 15 or 20 minutes before each show is enough.

Know the place of the bass

Our band's songwriting process has evolved over the years. Mark and Willy will demo stuff all day long in their home studios, so we'll pick them apart. I'll make suggestions in the process, sure, but as the years have gone on, the demos that they make are near-complete songs. This time our producer Josh Wilbur even got involved at demo stage, helping to shape and create the songs.

There are bass parts on those demo songs, and sometimes I'll replicate those if they're playing the riff, but occasionally there are parts that are more open to interpretation. I might play an ascending scale behind them, for example. Generally I will pound out the riff with the guitars, but occasionally I'll play along with a riff and accent something. If the riff changes key in the middle of it, maybe I'll drop when the key changes to playing the root. But I love riffing, man, maybe to my detriment. I've spent a few years doing it, so it's my normal.

Have faith in your bass gear

I haven't made any changes to my touring gear recently. I play my signature ESP bass, the rig is a Mesa 400+ head and a Mesa 8x10 cab, and I've been using an EBS compressor pedal. I also bounce back and forth between a Tech21 Sansamp and a Darkglass. I'm always a four-string player. We mostly use drop-D in Lamb Of God, but there's a fair amount of drop-C# as well and some drop-C. I like to take out one bass per tuning and then a backup or two ready to go. My signature bass has got a lot of wood on it, it's got some weight to it. You've got to trust your equipment – there's nothing worse than going out ready for anything, including facing a big crowd, and then something doesn't happen.

Don't fear complex bass parts

Our song 'Redneck', which we recorded in 2006 with the producer Gene 'Machine' Freeman, has a really difficult break in it. I said to him, 'This part is cool, and it sounds great, but I can't play it. There's no way I can record that today, knowing that I'm going to play shows and I won't be able to play this song. Go fuck yourself'. My attitude was that there are tricks you can use in the studio, but if you can't play something live, it's bullshit. You don't go and record crazy stuff that you can't do, just because the studio technology allows it. We got into a bit of an argument and he edited the part together with separate three-note sections, to show me what he wanted. In the end he made it clear that I just had to practise it and that I'd be able to play it eventually. He won the battle, and now it's a fun part to play in the set. I just had to quit being scared of it and get on it. ■

Lamb Of God's new, self-titled album is out now.
Info: www.lamb-of-god.com

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GEAR REVIEWS

Behold our world-beating bass gear review section, where we bring you the crop of each month's new, interesting or otherwise relevant bass guitars, bass amplifiers, bass cabs and bass effects. Occasionally we'll review a guitar effect if it's useful for bassists, but generally speaking, this zone is reserved for bass-specific gear.

We take our reviews seriously. *BGM* is the only print magazine devoted to bass in this country, and we have readers all over the world, so we're responsible about our conclusions. If a product is worth your time, we'll say so; if it's flawed, we'll make that clear. We're not beholden to advertisers in any way, and our tests are independent of the views of manufacturers and distributors.

When you read about a product here, you're getting a balanced review from an experienced bass tester. Value for money is at the top of our agenda in these cash-strapped times, but on the other hand, we believe in paying for quality.

Right, that's enough from me, and remember, this is just about the only place that it's good to have GAS!*

Joel McIver, Editor

*GAS = Gear Acquisition Syndrome (a malaise often suffered by bass players)

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MAYONES
Jabba 422

Classic, vintage looks, high-quality construction… and a sizeable pricetag. Mike 'Skywalker' Brooks meets the mighty Jabba

Mayones
www.mayones.com

£2030

Mayones basses have come a long way since we first encountered them in the mid-2000s. Compared against the brand's other body shapes and price points, this classic-looking Jazz variant looks pretty simple – but if it does the job, why do you need any bells and whistles? Let's take a closer look.

Build Quality

Vintage white with a three-ply tortoiseshell scratchplate is always a winning combination – and combined with the chrome hardware, many a bassist would be excused for drooling at the sight of the Jabba. Like its namesake in *Star Wars*, the bass has rounded body curves; these reduce the extremes of the legendary offset body-style, and with sensible contouring front and back, extensive cutaways and a pleasingly-contoured neck-heel, the playing experience is very much to the player's benefit.

The one-piece hard rock maple neck features the 38mm nut width that you would expect of a Jazz variant, and with its slim and sleek neck profile, 7.5" fingerboard radius and 20mm string spacing at the bridge, this really is a bass to play and enjoy. The setup is very impressive, with no sharp fret ends and a string action that sits well with any playing style you wish to employ. The pau ferro fingerboard is a worthy replacement for rosewood on this model, and features mother-of-pearl front-facing position markers with white dots on the fingerboard edge.

The chrome hardware looks the part and also performs well; the Mayones Big Foot bridge is a solid brass, high-mass unit while Hipshot Ultralite machine heads have been utilised. These are solidly attached and turn smoothly. The control set may look a little more complicated than your average Jazz, but it's relatively simple to deal with – volume, balance, bass, treble, a vintage tone control and an active/passive selector switch. All this runs through a Mayones M-BP2 active circuit, courtesy of a pair of Nordstrand NJ4SE single-coil pickups. What's not to like?

Sounds And Playability

Considering the fairly traditional timbers used in its construction, this Jabba model has a natural liveliness that serves it well. With a responsive vibrancy and a solid sustain that means harmonics are flying off the fingerboard, this bolt-on model has plenty of spring in its step. Plugging in, we're presented with all the classic Jazz sounds you would expect – and a whole lot more. In passive mode, the throaty Jazz bark is easily called upon, and panning between each pickup, those familiar tones are coaxed from each pickup without too much effort. The vintage tone control helps to maintain visions of a fine 60s Jazz.

Switch over to active mode and you're firmly in Super Jazz territory, the two-band EQ providing some turbo-charged oomph. The bass signal has increased power in the low end, and finesse and detail in the upper registers. The slap- and tap-lovers among you will revel in the tonal quality and delivery, while fingerstyle and rock players will also approve of the flexibility on offer – whether you require pedal-to-the-metal rock or honk-laden funk tones over the bridge pickup. The tones suit an impressively wide range of musical techniques and styles, while sounding very natural at the same time.

When it comes to playability, Mayones basses have a reputation for delivering the goods and this bass lives up to the billing. It's comfortable to wear, easy to navigate and a pleasure to play. It fits like a glove and will have you returning to it time and again. If there's one small gripe, it would be that the volume control borders on the on-off variety; for much of the control turn, there is no gradation and very little happens.

Conclusion

The Jabba 422 is a serious Jazz-style contender, and it comes as no surprise that the cachet of the Mayones brand is rising. This instrument easily justifies its pricetag, and if you want a no-nonsense bass machine with classic looks, old- and new-school sounds and playability that will put a smile on your face, then look no further…

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £2030
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Colour | Vintage white, gloss finish
Body | Alder
Neck | Hard rock maple, 34.25" scale, satin finish
Neck Joint | Bolt-on, six-bolt attachment
Nut Width | 38.5mm
Fingerboard | Pau ferro
Frets | 22
Pickups | 2 x Nordstrand NJ4SE single-coils
Electronics | Mayones M-BP2 2-band EQ preamp
Controls | Volume, pickup pan, bass, treble, vintage tone control, active/passive switch
Hardware | Chrome hardware, Mayones Vintage Big Foot bridge, Hipshot HB6C Ultralite machine heads
Weight | 3.9 kg / 8.59 lbs
Case/gig bag included | Hybrid gigbag
Left-hand option available | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Playability, tones, versatility
Minus | Volume control could be smoother, but it's a small point
Overall | All the plus points of a great Jazz Bass

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY ■■■■■■■■■□
SOUND QUALITY ■■■■■■■■■□
VALUE ■■■■■■■■■□

REVELATION
RBN 5

A five-string bass at this price? Is there a catch, asks Mike Brooks

The Bass Gallery	www.sutherlandtrading.com/revelation	£429.99
www.thebassgallery.com	www.sutherlandtrading.com/revelation	

The Revelation brand is known for delivering pocket-friendly instruments, and they tick many of the boxes that any player might require, but this particular model stopped us in our tracks. Once we'd picked ourselves up off the floor, it was time to look a little deeper and try to determine if there's a downside to the RBN 5's affordability...

Build Quality

There's no denying the looks on offer – the quilted maple top over an okoume body core with a dark sunburst and gloss finish is highly impressive, as is the matching headstock. Flip the bass over and the rich brown okoume is totally in keeping with the warm aesthetic. With contouring front and back to aid playing comfort, and a deep lower cutaway for upper fingerboard access, the curves complete a well-crafted body.

Then comes the 'But...' This is one heavy instrument – and weighing in at 4.5 kilos (10 lbs), it's not surprising that the bass suffers from significant headstock bias, with the body equally hefty in the weight and balance stakes. A strap offers some help in making the bass sit across the player's body at a playable angle but some support from the player's fretting hand is also required.

The broad maple fingerboard is a deviation from the standard slimness of a Jazz clone, especially given the 45mm nut width. That's not to say that this bass is a handful – its shallow C-shaped neck profile is accommodating and the overall setup is impressive, aside from a couple of sharp fret ends. Abalone fret markers adorn the front-facing of the fingerboard while black dots have been used along the side. The clear scratchplate allows more of the sumptuous quilted top to remain on display, and the chrome hardware functions as it should. There's a vintage-looking control plate and control set, made up of dual volume and tone controls for each of the Neobass-5 humbuckers.

Sounds And Playability

Unsurprisingly for such a weighty instrument, the acoustic tones are big and bold, with bags of sustain and a fair chunk of resonance – so if you like Jazz basses with a darker tone than usual, this model could well be for you. The string volume is clear and fairly even across all five strings, as well as across the whole neck. The low B string particularly deserves a mention with its powerful and taut delivery – surprising on a bass at this price.

Plugged in, and with both humbuckers at full blast and wide open tonally, the signal is very responsive and clear. Pulling the

tone controls back a little provides a smoother, rounded tone, but if you want grit and power with a significant bite to it, dig your pick out and go for it. The neck pickup is fat and powerful, while the bridge pickup brings a mid-range punch that helps to accentuate the natural bounce from the bolt-on construction. The instrument's response to different playing techniques is apparent, and its passive simplicity works very much in its favour. Thankfully, all four controls operate across the whole turn, which is pleasing to see.

With 18mm string spacing and a highly-playable string action, this is a fine bass to play and get to grips with – as long as you can handle the weight aspect. Some players prefer a heavier instrument, and if this is you, then there is much to admire here. The bass is comfortable to play and hold, especially if you're sitting down: it's just the hanging weight when standing up that detracts from its performance.

Conclusion

At £429.99, there is much here to impress any bassist, and sonically, the RBN 5 is a solid performer in every department. You're getting a lot of bass for your money, so prepare your biceps, give one a spin and see for yourself...

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £429.99
Made In | Indonesia
Colour | Dark sunburst, gloss finish
Body | Okoume with quilted maple top
Neck | Maple, 34" scale, gloss finish
Neck Joint | Bolt-on, four-bolt attachment
Nut Width | 45mm
Fingerboard | Maple
Frets | 21
Pickups | 2 x Alan Entwistle Neobass-5 Neodymium humbuckers
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume, volume, tone, tone
Hardware | Chrome hardware, standard bridge, open-gear elephant ear machine heads
Weight | 4.5 kg / 9.92 lbs
Case/gig bag included | No
Left-hand option available | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Playable, decent passive tones, amazing price
Minus | Did we mention that it's heavy?
Overall | Impressive value for money, and a fine bass to boot

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■□□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■■■

MICHAEL KELLY
Custom Collection Element 4

A classic design with some rewarding innovation, you say? Stuart Clayton gets Mike'd up

Hal Leonard
www.halleonardeurope.com

$649

After establishing themselves first as builders of acoustic bass guitars and mandolins, then later of electric guitars, Michael Kelly have recently taken their first steps into the bass world. The small, Korean-built range currently on offer builds on the look and feel of a much-loved classic, although with modifications and enhancements – some obvious, some not – that aim to provide a superior playing experience. We put the Custom Collection Element 4 through its paces.

Our Element 4 has a red cedar body topped with striped ebony, and zebraburst and burl tops are also available. The finish is gorgeous, with the high gloss of the ebony top perfectly paired with a matt black pickguard and black hardware. The large, exposed pole pieces on the Rockfield pickups are a nice aesthetic choice that work well here. A rock maple neck is topped with a pau ferro fretboard, with the headstock shaping veering away from the classic design foundation and into more modern territory. Finishing is good across the instrument, although the edges of the nut would benefit from a little extra filing. Internal wiring is neat, but there is some sawdust in the cavity that really should have been cleaned out. These are relatively minor issues that are simple to address, however.

Although the Element 4 borrows heavily from the classics, there are genuine innovations beneath the surface. The most notable of these is the Stealth Attack Bridge System. On its own, the bridge is a solid and nicely designed piece of hardware, but there's more to it than is initially obvious: for improved sustain, the bridge is mounted to both the body and to an aluminium tone block built into the body directly beneath. This fully integrated system adds mass to an important tonal element of the instrument, with the intention of greatly improving attack and sustain.

In terms of controls, the Element 4 has a master volume, a blend and a stacked treble/bass control. There's also a toggle switch for active and passive modes. In passive mode, the instrument responds well to all playing styles, with plenty of bite bursting from the bridge pickup, and a smoother, warmer tone offered by the neck pickup. In active mode, the tone controls add further breadth to the palette, but I was disappointed to hear significant noise from the pots when rotated. Again, this is something that is

relatively simple to sort out. In terms of playability, the Element is smooth and easy to get around thanks to a slim neck profile. Despite the presence of smaller tuning pegs, the headstock mass causes a certain amount of neck dive, although those who are used to playing much older instruments will certainly notice an improvement in this regard.

The Element 4 has much to commend it: it's an eye-catching instrument with some well-considered enhancements, and in this price bracket it should find an audience without any problem. There are some issues with build quality, but as noted above they're relatively minor and hopefully limited to our review instrument. The Element 4 would be well-suited to beginners with a good budget, or those with some experience looking to upgrade to a more versatile bass..

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | $649
Made In | Korea
Colour | Striped ebony (burl and zebraburst also available)
Body | Red cedar
Neck | Rock maple
Nut | Bone
Nut Width | 1.63" / 41.4mm
Fretboard | Pau ferro
Frets | 21
Pickups | Rockfield 4SW, voiced specifically for the Element bass
Controls | Volume, blend, stacked tone
Bridge | MK Stealth Attack Bridge System
Hardware | MK Die Cast

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Looks great: builds on the classic design very nicely
Minus | Some issues with build quality
Overall | A good first entry into the market from Michael Kelly

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

PEAVEY
MAX 300 Combo

A new range of up-to-date combos from Peavey has arrived. Do they continue in the giant footsteps of their historic predecessors? Mike Brooks tests one of the new amps with a nostalgic tear in his eye

Barnes & Mullins
www.bandm.co.uk

£529

Times change, but the humble bass combo is still a worthy piece of gear for many players, fulfilling our most important requirements – portability, affordability, power, and quality of sound. Peavey combos have been a reliable workhorse for our community for decades; in fact, many bassists would tell you that they've been the rule by which other combos were measured.

With their new MAX 300 model, has Peavey come up with a combo that continues this enviable legacy?

Build Quality

The unit is constructed from high-quality lightweight timber, the advantage of which is that it keeps the weight down, although it will also affect the quality of the low end. Covered in rugged grey vinyl with hard rounded plastic corners for protection, and a curved metal grille to protect the speaker, the combo certainly looks up to the job. A heavy-duty carry-handle is situated on the upper face and is suitably positioned, considering the height and width of the combo.

The drivers are angled upwards to provide clearer delivery, while porting has also been used to tune the unit accordingly. The configuration of two 10" drivers should help to maximise the bottom-end delivery while retaining a fair degree of mid-range punch, while the tweeter should deliver a clear top-range response. The control panel is inset into the top-edge of the unit, and the controls themselves are fairly low-profile, so damaging them is unlikely.

The simple control set comprises inputs for active and passive basses, Gain, a

three-band EQ and Master Volume, after which there are selector buttons for Overdrive, Contour, Mid-Shift, Bright, the exotic-sounding Kosmos-C and a selector button to access the tuner and mute. The rear panel sports a Tweeter Defeat switch, FX loop, XLR DI, Aux-In input and Headphones output, a single Speakon output for an additional cabinet and a footswitch socket, although a footswitch is not included.

Sounds

Armed with several passive and active basses, with a five-string among them for good measure, we fired the unit up. With the EQ set flat, we slowly increased the Gain and Master Volume: this produces a very impressive performance, with the 10" speakers producing a tight response with a surprisingly full bass tone. Bringing the EQ into play opens up a lot of possibilities, giving the passive basses some colour and extra tonal options. The EQ is well voiced with 15dB of boost across the board at 50Hz and 6kHz for bass and treble. Our initial impressions were positive, as the combo projected very well with an impressively hefty punch in the midrange.

The Contour switch offers a bass and treble boost with a mid-cut, which is useful for slapping – although it leaves the signal sounding a little 'boxy' as the mids have been scooped out. The Mid-Shift option offers 250Hz or 600hz as a centre point for the mids; the Bright option offers a 10dB boost at 1kHz; and the Overdrive effect is simple to operate, using the Gain and Volume controls. It makes good use of tube emulation circuitry and combines well with this speaker format, keeping the signal tight and warm without becoming too flappy.

A major selling point for this range is the inclusion of the Kosmos-C option. This is designed to enhance the low end by producing harmonics in the lower range for extra boost; it makes the unit sound bigger and larger than it is without pushing the speakers to their limit. Although this works very effectively, adding power and bottom-end spread across the lower frequencies, the output of your bass will have an impact on its performance. Naturally, active and five-string basses fare slightly better than passive instruments.

Conclusion

This is a great all-in-one package at a very reasonable price, and I can't see anyone being disappointed by a purchase. Peavey's legacy is secure, especially at this price point, so do investigate if you're in the market for a mid-priced combo.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £529
Made In | China
Power | 300 watts RMS
Features | Gain, bass, middle, treble, master, chromatic tuner, overdrive, contour, mid-shift, bright, Kosmos-C, tune/mute, tweeter defeat
Speakers | 2 x 10" speakers and tweeter
Dimensions | 580mm (H) x 492mm (W) x 412mm (D) / 22.8" (H) x 19.4" (W) x 16.2" (D))
Connections | ¼" jack inputs (active and passive), ¼" jack Send/Return FX loop, balanced XLR DI output with ground lift switch, 3.5mm auxiliary input, 3.5mm headphone output, ¼" jack footswitch, Speakon output
Weight | 21 kg / 46.4 lbs

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Tone-shaping, build quality
Minus | None
Overall | An excellent all-in-one solution

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	8/10
SOUND QUALITY	8/10
VALUE	8/10

IK MULTIMEDIA

Axe I/O Audio Interface

Freddy Villano runs a bass through this fully-featured amp-modelling unit – and can't help but be impressed...

IK Multimedia
www.ikmultimedia.com

£349

For the bass community, IK Multimedia is known for their excellent amp-modelling plug-ins, particularly the Ampeg SVX 2 Software Suite, which has been a source of killer bass tones for quite a few years now in various iterations. The opportunity to review their new Axe I/O audio interface is definitely welcome.

The new two-in, five-out Axe I/O offers bass-centric features such as adjustable impedance, streamlined re-amplification functions and a variety of instrument input circuits, plus a wealth of recording options including high-end mic preamps, top-of-the-line converters, 192 kHz operation and an extended frequency response – which is great for bassists. The unit also doubles as a controller that allows bass players to record and perform with real-time effects such as octave pedals and envelope filters. Included with the Axe I/O hardware is a massive bundle of software and plug-ins that includes everything needed to track, mix, and master.

Removing the Axe I/O from its box, the first thing that is immediately admirable is how ruggedly built the enclosure seems to be, and economic in size too. The product's 7.7" footprint takes up very little space on a desk. The external power supply comes with prong layouts for any part of the world, so you're good to go if you decide to travel with it. I was a little surprised that a new product such as this uses USB 2.0 inputs instead of USB 3.0 or USB-C, but this was useful in my case as I use an older iMac. I plugged it in and went online to register and download the plug-ins that come with the software bundle – a simple task.

Time to play some music – so I opened up a Pro Tools session, selected Setup > Playback Engine, chose the Axe I/O from the options list and was ready to go. For this particular session, which was a mid-tempo, riff-oriented metal song, I skipped running two signals as I often mic an amp. Instead I went direct into the Axe I/O, so that I could play with the plug-ins in AmpliTube 4.

I dialled in a variety of tones using 15 Rock, which combines the SVX-15R – essentially an Ampeg B-15 – with an overdrive pedal, 70s Vintage Bass, which is an Acoustic 360 plug-in, and Clean SVX-CL, which is an Ampeg Classic with an 8x10" speaker cabinet. All of the tones were impressive and convincing, although I was most excited when I stumbled across the BA250 Graphic Preamplifier and recognised the fluorescent green glow and graphic EQ of my beloved Trace Elliot: I ended up using it for the session. It's worth pointing out that you can manipulate the tone with any of these plug-ins, too, replete with all of the functionality of the actual amps. With what seems like zero latency, the Axe I/O makes tracking bass as easy and straightforward as ever.

There was a time when the mic'd amp versus plug-in argument had merit, but technology has come a long way and you'd be hard pressed to hear the difference between any of IK Multimedia's plug-ins and the real thing. Investigate with our full recommendation.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £349
Features | Fully discrete Class A PURE circuit, Z-Tone impedance-adapting circuit, two PURE discrete Class A preamps, assignable data knob with push encoder on the front panel, active pickup mode, multi-segment LED VU meters, Monitor knob, chromatic tuner, software package, two Hi-Z ¼" inputs, two rear combo inputs with phantom power, two dedicated back panel controller inputs, MIDI in/out, two floating balanced outputs, two unbalanced and one floating unbalanced Amp Out, high-current headphones out.
Dimensions | 19.5cm x 19.5cm x 5.3cm / 7.7" x 7.7" x 2.1"
Weight | 1 kg / 2.2 lbs

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Excellent range of tone-shaping options
Minus | USB 2.0 ports may not suit all users
Overall | The Axe I/O's impressive range of features definitely merits a road-test

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY ■■■■■■■■■□
SOUND QUALITY ■■■■■■■■■■
VALUE ■■■■■■■■□□

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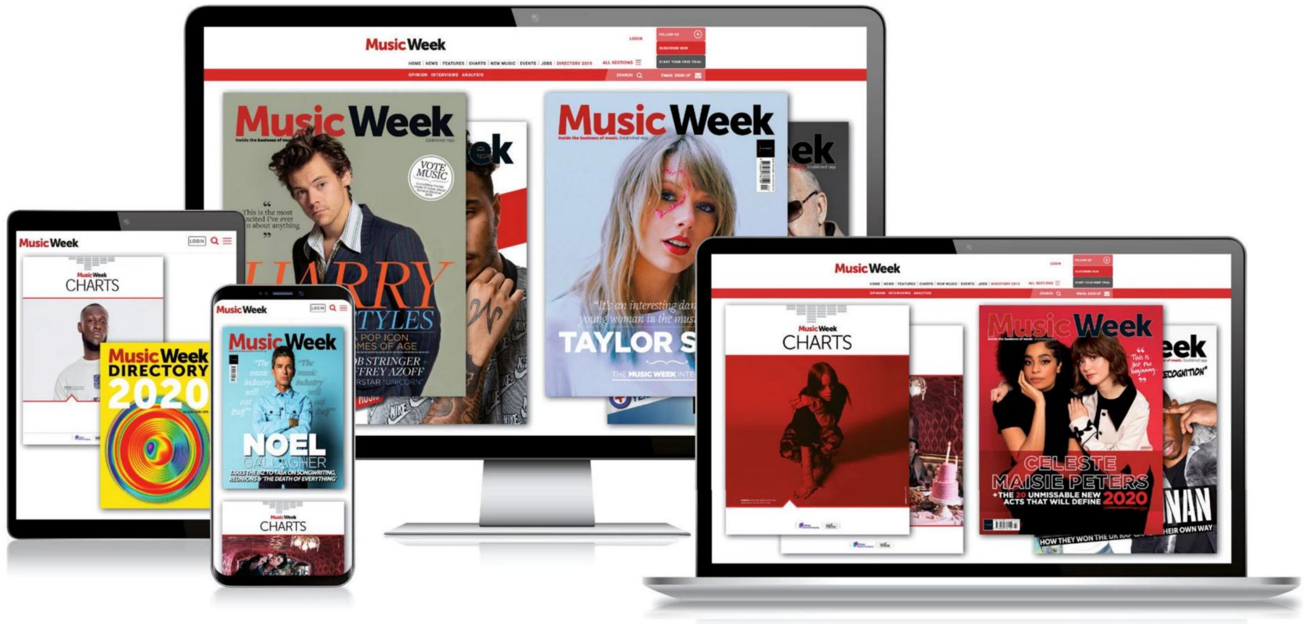

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BASS TUITION

Making you a better bass player

Welcome to our tuition section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in... **Joel McIver, editor**

Kickstart your journey to the top of the bass world here!
Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist. Across nearly two decades of touring, and a huge catalogue of solo and collaborative albums, he's built up a worldwide audience for his looping and processing approach to bass sound. Recent collaborators include Beardyman, Reeves Gabrels, Andy Gangadeen, Tanya Donelly, Divinity Roxx and Jonas Hellborg. He been teaching bass for over two decades, and lectures at universities and colleges across the globe. Victor Wooten once commented, 'Steve Lawson is a brilliant musician. I've known about him and listened to him for many years. He may not be one of the most famous bassists – but he is definitely one of the most talented'. Who are we to argue?
www.stevelawson.net

STEVE LAWSON

Beginners 50

Now you're rolling with theory and techniques, it's time to hit the next level
Philip Mann studied at the London College of Music, securing bachelor's and master's degrees in performance before receiving a scholarship to study under Jeff Berlin at the Players School of Music in Florida. Endorsed by Overwater and Vanderkley, he's now a busy international freelancing electric and double bassist. His performance and session credits include work with double Grammy Award-winning guitarist Albert Lee, five-time Grammy Award nominee Hunter Hayes, Deep Purple's Steve Morse, Billy Bragg and country artist Peter Donegan. He has featured as a solo demonstration artist at the London Bass Guitar Show every year since 2012 and is currently a member of the visiting faculty at the Players School while also lecturing for Scott's Bass Lessons.

PHIL MANN

Intermediate 54

Take the bass world by storm with the ultimate tuition section
Stuart Clayton has been a professional musician, writer and transcriber since 2002 and has worked in function bands, cruise ship gigs, theatre shows and more. He spent four years recording and touring the world with legendary Emerson, Lake & Palmer drummer Carl Palmer and has worked for *BGM* since its first issue. Since 2007 Stuart has worked as the Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Bristol, where he continues to teach all levels of the degree course. In addition, he has also worked as the Bass Guitar Technical Specialist for the Rockschool exam board. Stuart now runs Bassline Publishing, which publishes transcription books for bassists such as Mark King, Marcus Miller, Stuart Hamm, Bernard Edwards, Stuart Zender and John Entwistle, as well as an acclaimed range of tuition books.

STUART CLAYTON

Advanced 60

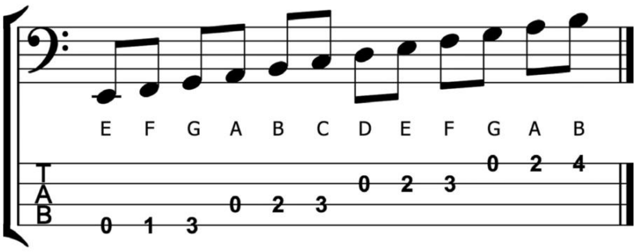
BGM Notation Legend

The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in *Bass Guitar Magazine*

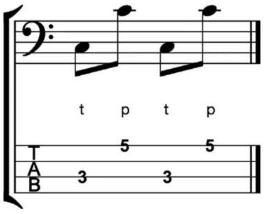
The Stave: most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the stave.

Tablature: this is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature stave will have five or six lines as necessary.

Notes shown in brackets indicate that a note has been tied over from a previous bar.

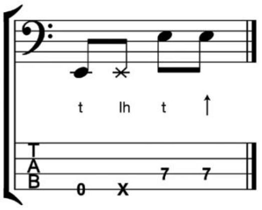


PLAYING TECHNIQUES



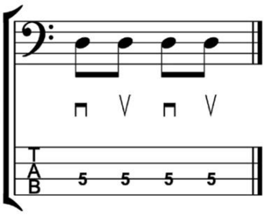
SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE

Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a 't', notes popped with the fingers marked with a 'p'



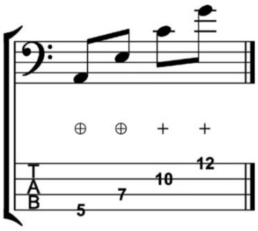
ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE

Fretting hand slaps are marked 'lh' and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow



PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE

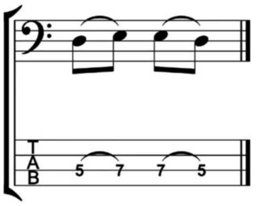
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up)



TAPPING TECHNIQUES

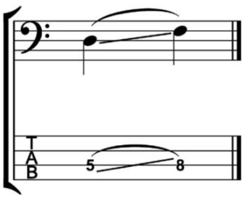
Fretting hand taps are shown with a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are just '+'. Particular fingers may be shown with numbers.

FRETTING TECHNIQUES



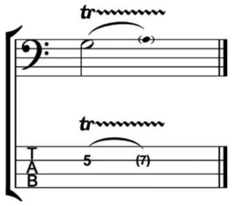
HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF

Hammer-ons and pull-offs are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand



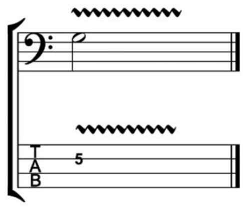
SLIDE (GLISSANDO)

Slides are performed by playing the first note then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note



TRILLS

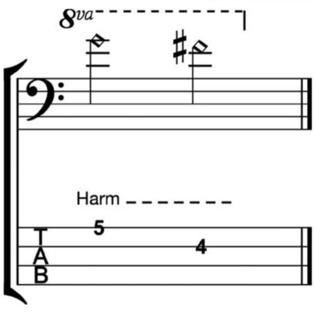
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown using hammer-ons and pull-offs



VIBRATO

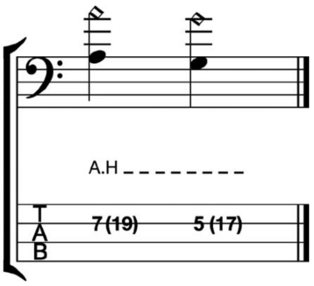
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger

PLAYING HARMONICS



NATURAL HARMONICS

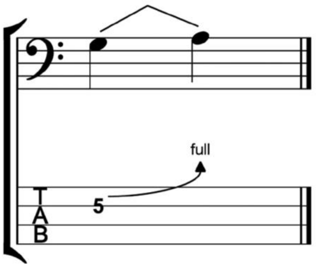
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated



ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

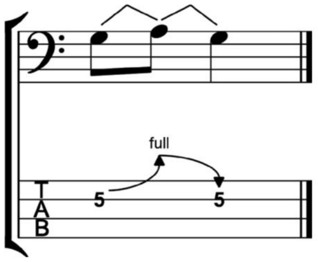
Pluck the string while fretting the lower note and touching the edge of the picking hand's thumb to the note in brackets

BENDING NOTES



BEND

The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: ½ = semitone, full = tone



BEND AND RELEASE

The note is bent up to the interval indicated then released back to its original pitch

STEVE LAWSON

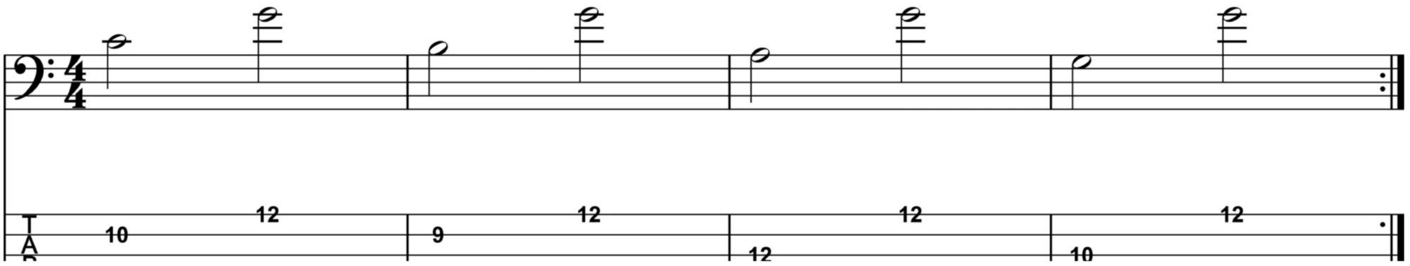
Beginners' Tutorial

Looping without a looper… is such a thing even possible? Steve Lawson says it is, so listen up

I hope you've been having fun with our looping exercises over the last couple of months. This month I want to look at one of the things that looping introduces us to which we can apply without looping – the idea of a pedal point, which is a note that stays the same while other aspects of the music move around it.

We've looked before at sustaining open strings while playing fretted notes on top, but this time we're going to explore what's called an inverted pedal point – having the unchanged note on the top rather than in the bass. Let's jump in and then talk about how we can use it…

Example 1



As usual, if the ledger lines in the notation look scary, just focus on the TAB. Here we want to let each note sustain for as long as possible so they all overlap. I could have notated all the notes overlapping, but it would've made it harder to read, and remember what we said last month about the purpose of notation being to communicate clearly?

Here, the G is the note that we might otherwise loop. It's in the same place in each bar, so we could remove the problem of trying to play two notes at once and move our fingers to make it possible by off-loading that work to the looper. But as we've explored in the last couple of columns, the looper brings with it its own set of learning challenges.

If we were to loop it, we'd have to come up with a way of doing it musically that didn't leave the beginning of the song sounding as if we're just preparing for the rest of the song to happen. In other words, how to make the process of capturing a single note that fits with the rest of the arrangement would definitely take some thought.

After that, we'd then come up against one of the weird mental things that happens when we're looping – the tendency for the loop to overstay its welcome. Here we encounter another concept that we've touched on briefly before, which is the idea that certain pieces of technology make certain modes of playing possible, rather than forcing us to play in a certain way.

A loop pedal has an affordance for repeating things over and over again. There is an invitation once we've looped something that sounds good to leave it there, as some kind of recognition of the effort it took to get it right in the first place – but there's nothing in the music that necessarily demands we do that.

The idea that the loop determines what the music must sound like is a compelling one, but it's not helpful. We need to be constantly checking the development of our musical skills against what the music itself requires. That's not to say we can't have fun with looping – or in this instance, with pedal points – but when it comes to applying them in a performance or recording situation, we need to get used to allowing the music to dictate what's required, beyond our initial excitement about this cool new pedal we just bought, or the technique we just worked out.

Makes sense? Good. So, by playing the high note instead of looping it, it becomes much easier to see this one idea as part of a whole range of possible approaches to the bass part of a song, instead of getting caught up in the loopiness of what our new pedal makes possible. It also makes it possible for us to change aspects of the sound of that high note to account for changes in the music as it goes through. We can play it quieter or louder, and as we get more comfortable with it, we can make little adjustments to our technique that will vary the tone, perhaps making it more prominent in the sections where there's no vocal.

From a technique point of view, the third bar is the really tricky one. Bars 1 and 2 require us to get comfortable with our index finger shifting from the C on the 10th fret to the B on the 9th fret. It's quite possible to play this with your ring finger on the C – so feel free to experiment with that – but my own inclination is towards keeping your hands as relaxed as possible at all times, and using your ring and pinky fingers for both those first two intervals feels more relaxed to me than the stretch from middle to pinky.

When we get to the A in the bass, we are now spanning three strings on the same fret. While keeping your pinky finger on the high G, it's worth experimenting with each of your other three fingers to see which is the most comfortable for playing that A at the 12th fret. There are a lot of variables here that will impact how easy it is for you to reach those notes: the design and setup of your bass, your position while seated or standing, and how far out from your body you've got the neck.

> "WE NEED TO GET USED TO ALLOWING THE MUSIC TO DICTATE WHAT'S REQUIRED, BEYOND OUR INITIAL EXCITEMENT ABOUT THIS COOL NEW PEDAL"

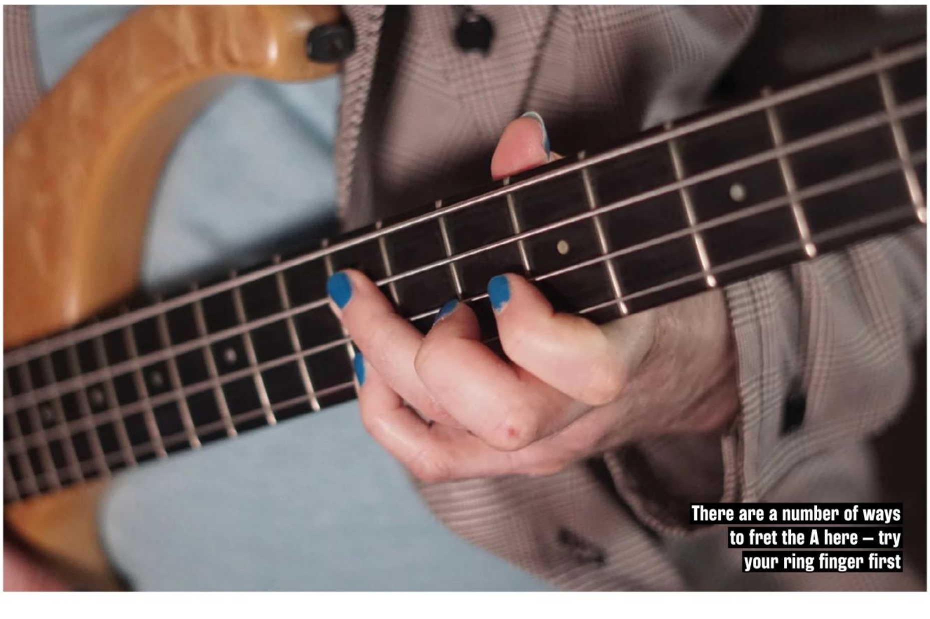
If your bass is too close into your body, you may find that moving up the neck requires you to contort to reach these notes comfortably. I like to use the forearm of my picking hand to gently lean on the body of the bass and cause it to point further away from my body so I have unhindered access to those higher frets.

Let's have a little think about how and why we came up with this pattern. We are in the key of C Major, as is so often the case here – thanks to the 'no sharps, no flats' ease of understanding – and we're starting out with a C and G. The G is the fifth of our C Major chord, so we're starting with the safest of sounds. The bass note walking down from there to the low G is a very common progression. Variations on that walk down exist in a huge number of songs.

So what does the high G do to it? We've already seen that it's the fifth of the C chord. When we go to the B in the bass,

It's okay to use your first and fourth fingers for a three-note stretch

If your pinky finger feels weak, brace it with your ring and middle fingers


There are a number of ways to fret the A here – try your ring finger first

something interesting happens, which is that while B is the lowest note we're playing, it is not in this instance the root note. What we have here is a G chord (G Major is G, B and D) with the B in the bass. When we play the third of a chord in the bass, instead of the root, that's called a first inversion. If we were to have the fifth in the bass instead of the root, that would be a second inversion.

Inversions are very often used to provide a smoother movement in a bass-line, as is the case here. If we were to play the G in the bass under that second chord, we'd have a line that went C, G, A, G, which is nowhere near as fluid as the walk down that we have in the example above. The A and G together imply an A minor 7 chord – A being the root and G being the minor 7th. The two Gs together we hear as a G Major chord.

One of the really interesting things here is how our ears are able to infer all of that harmonic information from just two notes at a time. Our lives have been

> "INVERSIONS ARE VERY OFTEN USED TO PROVIDE A SMOOTHER MOVEMENT IN A BASS-LINE... A AND G TOGETHER IMPLY AN A MINOR 7 CHORD"

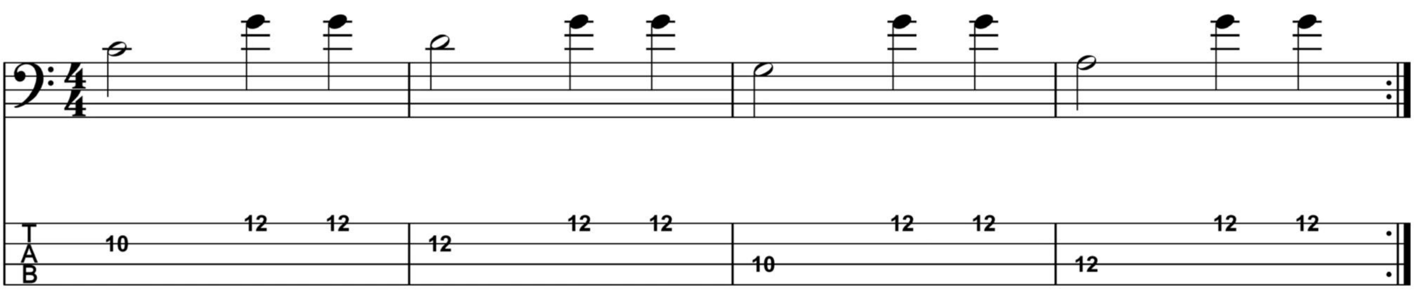
soundtracked by music since we were babies: everywhere we go, there's music playing, and over time we build up a set of expectations about what's going on. What we hear is not just governed by the physics of sound, but by psychoacoustics, which is how we perceive and interpret what sounds mean. Play only the bass part of a song to someone, and watch them react once they recognise the song... There's a moment when it's just a string of notes with no recognition attached, and then all of a sudden.. a-ha! That's 'Psycho Killer' by Talking Heads!

This happens on another level with harmonic expectation, where just a couple of notes can build up the impression of a much fuller and more realised set of harmonies. Electric bass is the perfect instrument for exploring these ideas, because it lends itself to two- and three-note chords rather than the wider, fuller harmonic sound of piano or guitar.

This exercise allows us to start looking for notes that form a common thread through a particular progression, and then build a part around that. It's a trick that singers have used throughout the history of pop music: keep the melody the same as the chords change, and allow the relationship between the two to give the melody new meaning. Here, the relationship between the G and each lower note changes how the G sounds. It's a huge part of what makes the looping exercises from the last couple of months sound so cool, but here we get to explore it without being tied to technology.

To finish up this week, we're going to change the bass notes and the rhythm a little. It's important that in tackling these exercises you seek to find the principle on which the exercise rests, rather than getting hung up on this one version of the idea being somehow the important bit. An exercise is a crack in the door that invites us to go in and explore. The exploration is what happens when you get curious and wonder how else this idea can be applied...

Example 2



The great Tony Choy, a master of Latin , funk and metal lines

Here we've mixed up the order of the bass notes so they don't flow in one direction, and we're now playing the high G twice. One tip for playing this with your picking hand is to use your thumb on the low note and alternate the high G with your first and second fingers. This may take some getting used to if you're used to having your thumb planted somewhere, but supporting the weight of the bass with the forearm of your picking hand will free up your fingers to do new things.

In the first example, the G chord – the V chord in the key of C – resolves very strongly back to the C. Because the chords don't follow a predictable resolution, this progression cycles round in a slightly more flowing way. A huge number of pop songs around at the moment use this trick of avoiding an obvious resolution – or cadence – back to the I chord. For the listener, it means that the experience of listening is one of perpetually waiting for the song to land. It's permanently up in the air. For this reason it's important that when we're involved in writing music we think about what the music is for, and what it needs to do in the context of the song. We can pick up tricks from talking to songwriters or reading about their processes that will help us become better bassists.

> "THINK ABOUT WHAT THE MUSIC IS FOR, AND WHAT IT NEEDS TO DO IN THE CONTEXT OF A SONG"

Tina Weymouth

I'm going to finish this week's column with two suggestions. The first is to look up the song 'I Saw You' by solo bassist and singer-songwriter John Lester. The song is built around a bass-line derived from exactly the process we've been exploring: two-note chords with an inverted pedal point on an acoustic bass guitar. John is a brilliant musician and a source of a whole lot of bass inspiration for me.

The second research tip is to look up the Sodajerker On Songwriting Podcast. The guys at Sodajerker have interviewed literally hundreds of renowned songwriters about how they do what they do, and so many of the tips are directly applicable to what we do as bassists in a songwriting situation. They have also featured a number of incredible bassists, including Marcus Miller, Meshell Ndegeocello and Stanley Clarke.

Have fun, take it slow, and see what you can discover!

PHIL MANN

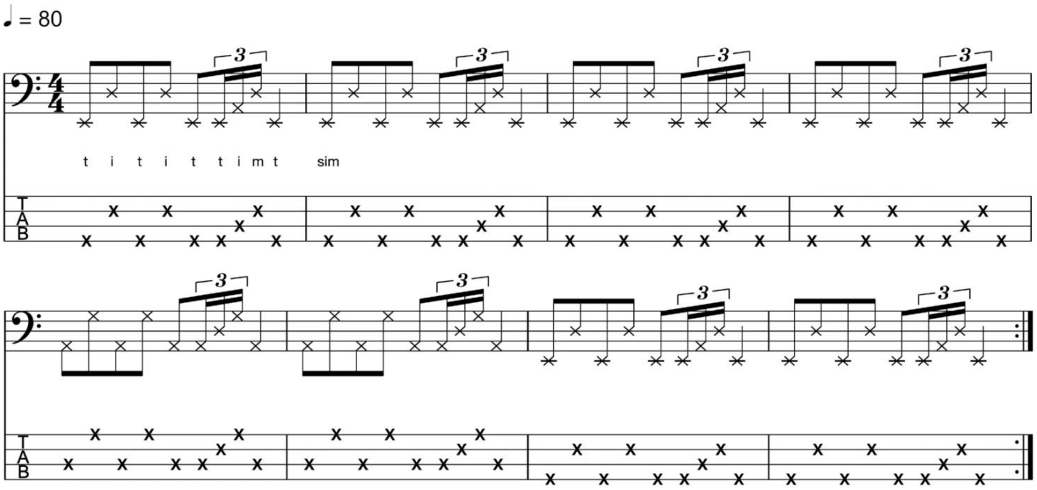
Intermediate Tutorial

Ready to take the next step in your bass journey? Phil Mann is here to guide you along the way, but be prepared for a dose of fingertip abrasion...

As you progress through your career as a bassist, a number of unexpected abilities will develop along the way. Woodwork craftsmanship is such a skill, acquired from various attempts to bolster loose strap-button holes with matchsticks. Some of you may obtain some flair with a paintbrush after applying clear nail polish to the heads of grub screws in an effort to stop tired bridge saddles from collapsing. My favourite is the copying skills gained from painstakingly tracing the outline of neck pockets onto old credit cards. On more than one occasion, our flexible friends have been modified to become a homemade neck shim. This month is an opportunity for you to become a scholar in blister maintenance, so protect your fingers with plastic wrap.

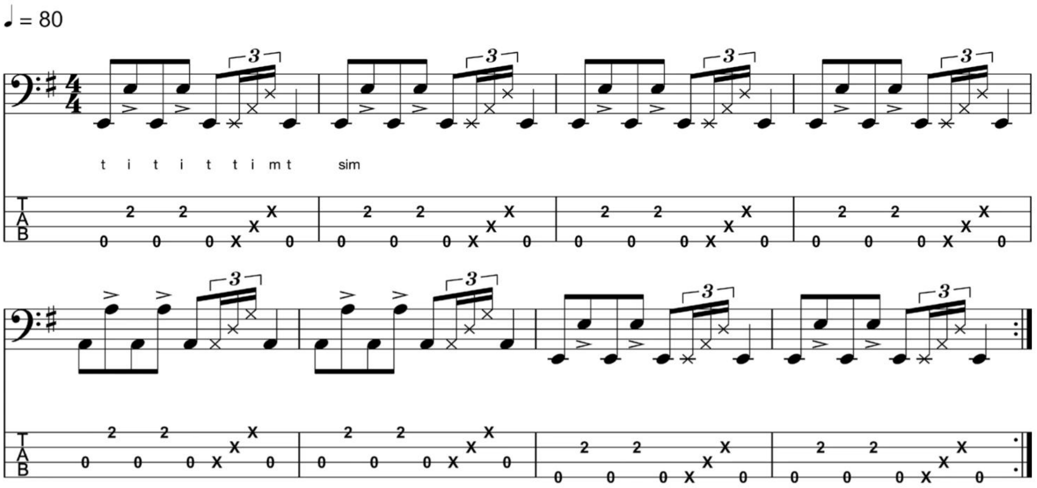
Example 1

Once your fingertips are ready for deployment, take a look at our opening eight measures. As you know, 16th note triplets are essentially three individual notes of equal value occupying the same space as a single 8th note. On the third beat of bar one, you'll need to pluck the first dead note with the underside of your thumb before attempting to play the coinciding pitches with your index and middle fingers.



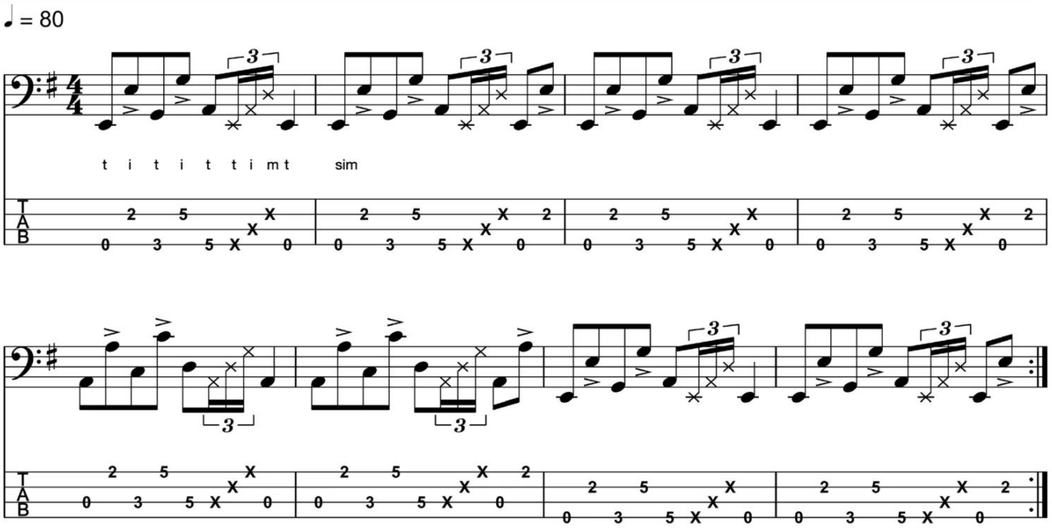
Example 2

Example 2 takes the rhythmic components of Example 1 and applies pitch. For the first four bars, you will focus around an E minor tonality, before moving up a fourth to A minor in bars five and six. Melodically, there's not a lot to report, as the phrases only use root and octave intervals. However, 16th-note triplets present themselves in a flurry of dead notes, so keep an eye on the situation and manage it accordingly. Rest is your friend!



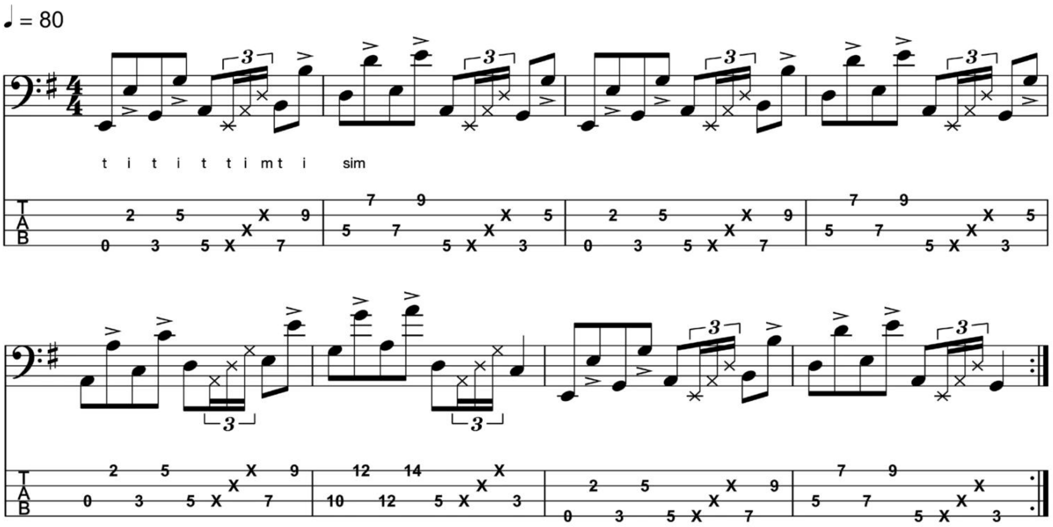
Example 3

Ascending from E to A through minor tonality, Example 3 is a funky little motif that resembles a hyperactive disco pattern. You'll spot some accents among the first, second and fourth off-beats, but please note that these are only accents, not an invitation to pluck the string as if it were slap bass. None of this month's studies involve slap: we're simply attempting to acquire some fresh rhythmical perspectives.



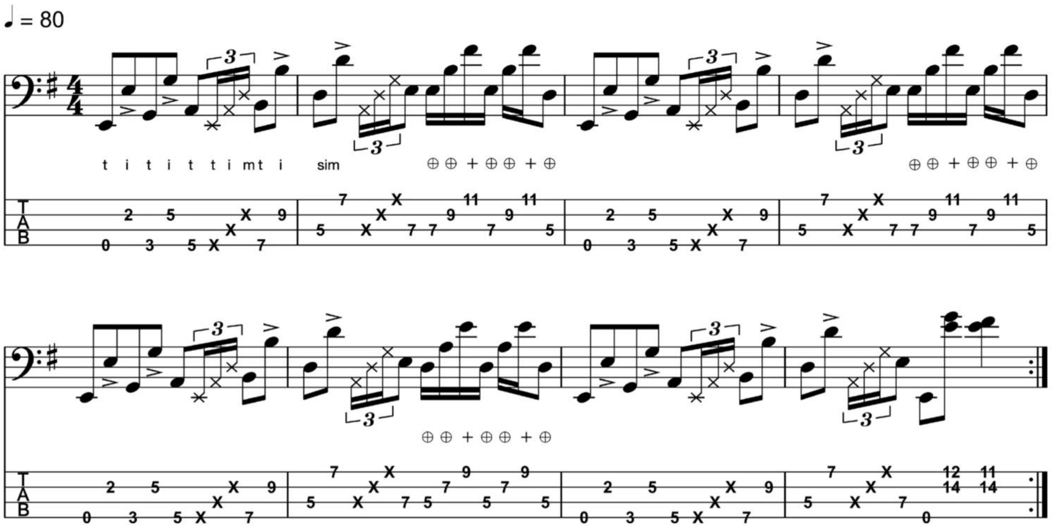
Example 4

Before this point, all of the rhythmic and melodic information has been devised within a single measure, but Example 4 now expands to a second. Essentially, during the first measure of each motif the melodic information ascends from the root note of E minor to its diatonic fifth, using octaves. Once attained, the motif then descends from this register to finally resolve on the minor 3rd. As with all of our studies, 16th note triplets continue to be the main focal point, so maintain rigidity in your plucking-hand technique throughout.



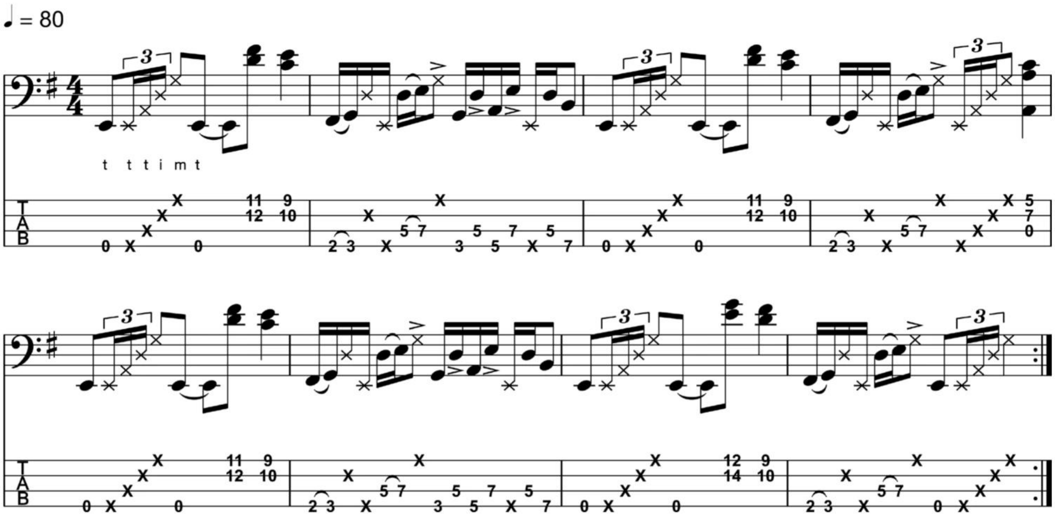
Example 5

Example 5 differs in two ways. The first is the location of the 16th note triplets, which appear more sporadically. There's also some tapped 9th intervals. Ensure you read the notation correctly in these circumstances, assigning the appropriate notes to the most suitable digits: the root and 5th intervals of each chord are executed with the left hand, while the 9th is delivered with the right.



Example 6

Natural Minor harmony dictates that the triads on the sixth and seventh diatonic degrees present themselves as major. Throughout the following measures you'll encounter this theoretical insight through an array of double stops. In each instance, try to pluck the specified pitches simultaneously with your index and middle fingers, but remember that this month's goal is to refine our 16th-note triplet delivery.

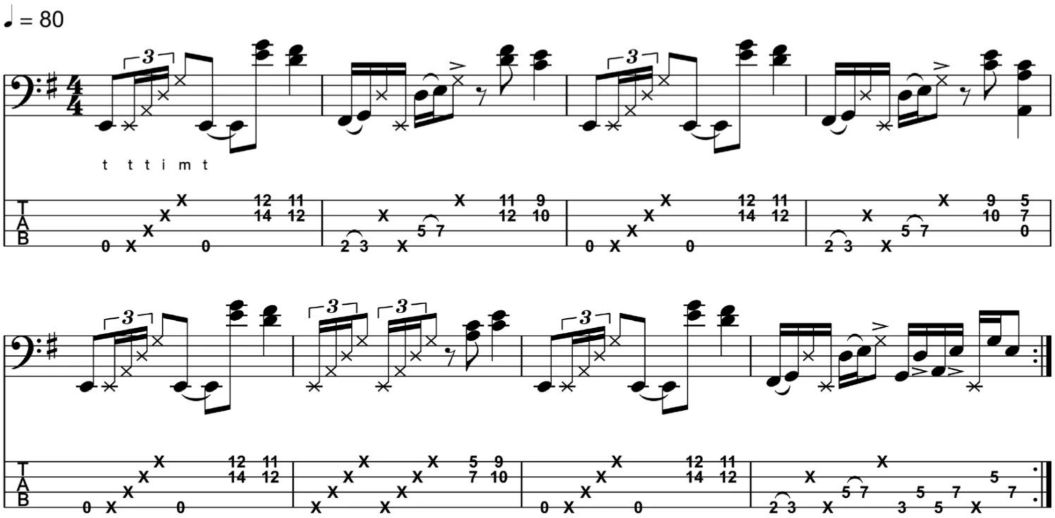


Example 7

And just like that, we reach this month's penultimate study. On initial analysis, it's easy to assume that not much has changed rhythmically, but on closer inspection there's a substantial alteration in technique.

Essentially, what was originally a three-note phrase has now evolved to a four-note pattern that resolves on the subsequent down beat. In order to portray the notation accurately, employ your thumb in a manner that resembles the use of a plectrum.

Play the initial dead note of the triplet with the underside of your thumb, sweeping through the string, and immediately play the subsequent pitch. Ideally, this should be a single, seamless movement. This allows you to redistribute your index and middle fingers in an effort to portray the remaining rhythms. This sweep-picking movement is time-consuming, but have patience, as the results will be well worth it.

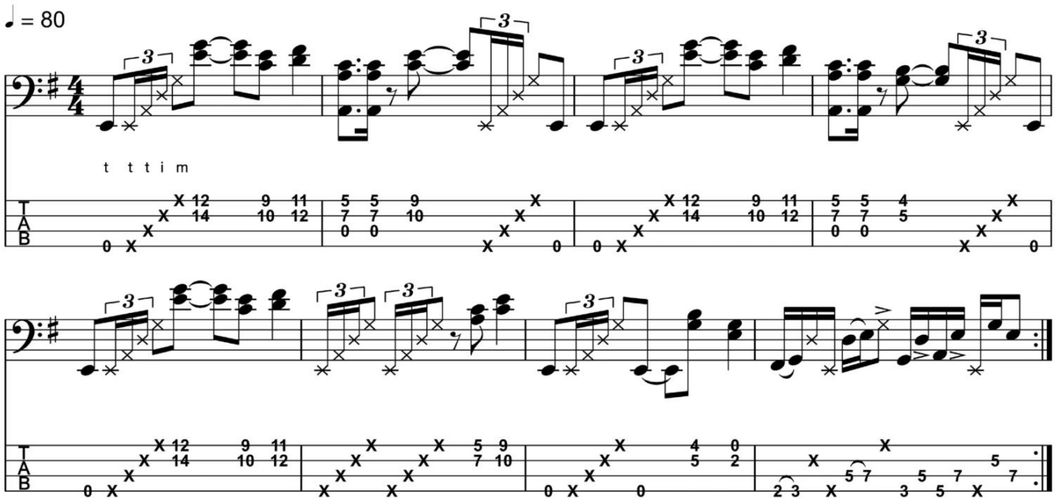


"IN ORDER TO PORTRAY THE NOTATION ACCURATELY, EMPLOY YOUR THUMB IN A MANNER THAT RESEMBLES A PLECTRUM"

Hadrien Feraud: a master of thumb techniques

Example 8

This month's final study continues to practise the sweeping thumb technique encountered in the last exercise. Cast your eyes over the second and fourth measures and you'll notice a dotted quarter-note rhythm on beat one. This increases the duration of the note by half of its initial length – in this case, a quarter-note plus an eighth. Enjoy, and I'll see you next time!



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Harley Benton

STUART CLAYTON

Advanced Tutorial

Combining chord strumming into your slapping practice may seem like a tricky task — but bass guru Stuart Clayton is here to make it easy

Welcome back to my column on the slap bass technique. Over the last few issues, we've been looking at some of the more advanced techniques: fretting-hand slaps, machine triplets, and playing double stops. We're going to carry on in a similar vein in this issue and look at ways in which we can incorporate chord strumming into our slap technique.

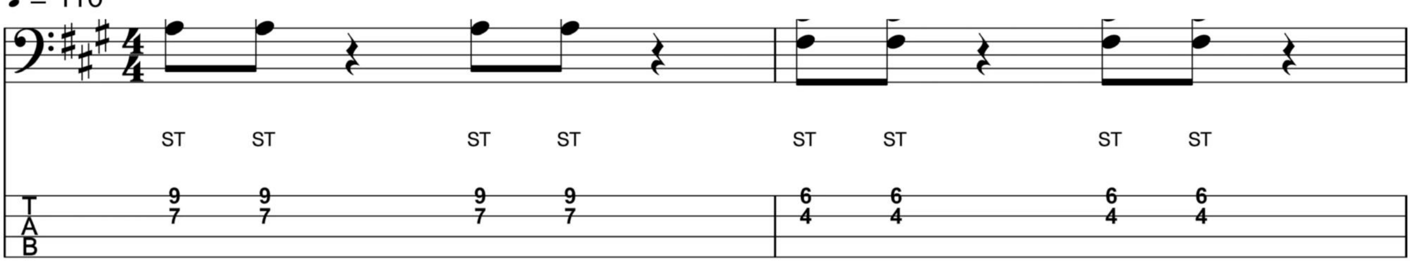
Strumming chords isn't necessarily a slap bass technique, but it's one that integrates with it extremely well. Many bass players have incorporated strumming into their slap bass toolkit over the years: a great example is Stanley Clarke, who used the technique very effectively in his bass anthem 'School Days'. I strongly recommend listening to this track alongside studying the lines in this column. In addition, be sure to check out 'Tommy The Cat' by Primus, 'The Lesson' by Victor Wooten, a live version of 'Over There' by Level 42, and 'Strum' by Marcus Miller. These are all fantastic examples of how chord strumming can be integrated into the slap bass style.

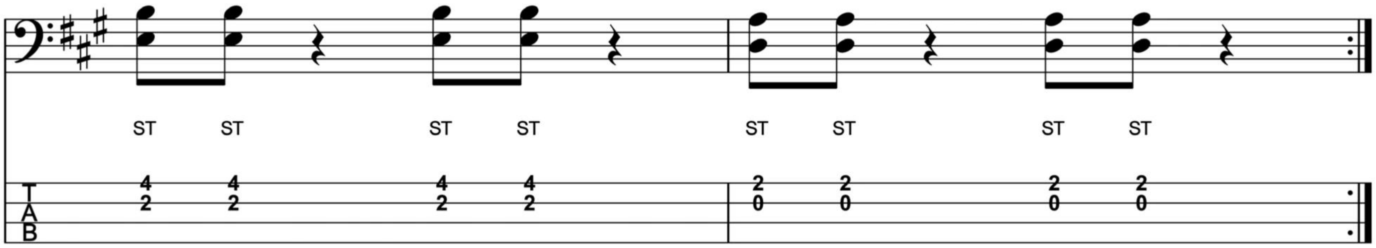
UPSTROKES AND DOWNSTROKES

Compared with some of the techniques that we've covered in this column, strumming is a relatively simple one to master. Everyone has seen a guitar being strummed, and the technique is pretty much exactly the same when applied to the bass. The trick is to make sure that you are striking the strings with your fingernails: this gives the notes the hard-edged attack that is required.

In order to strum the bass effectively, you need to be adept at playing upstrokes as well as downstrokes with your fingers. In the top photograph (right), you can see the hand positioned over the strings with the fingers retracted, ready to strum the strings. In the lower pic, you can see the fingers extended, having strummed the strings, ready to strum them again on the upstroke.

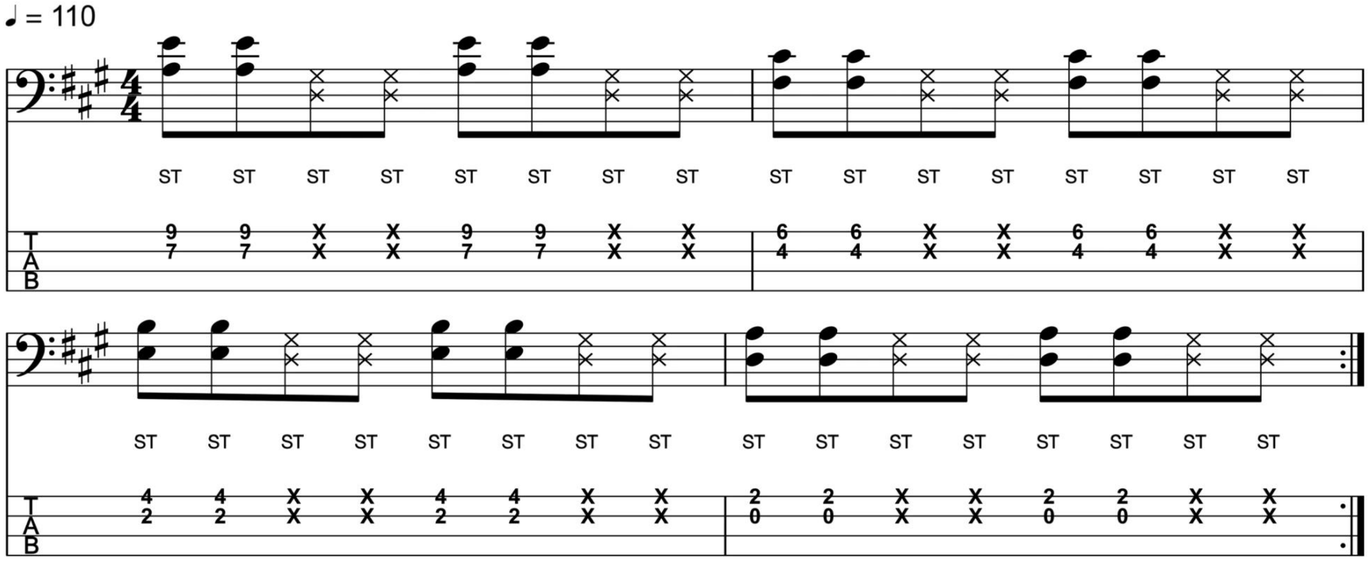
Example 1





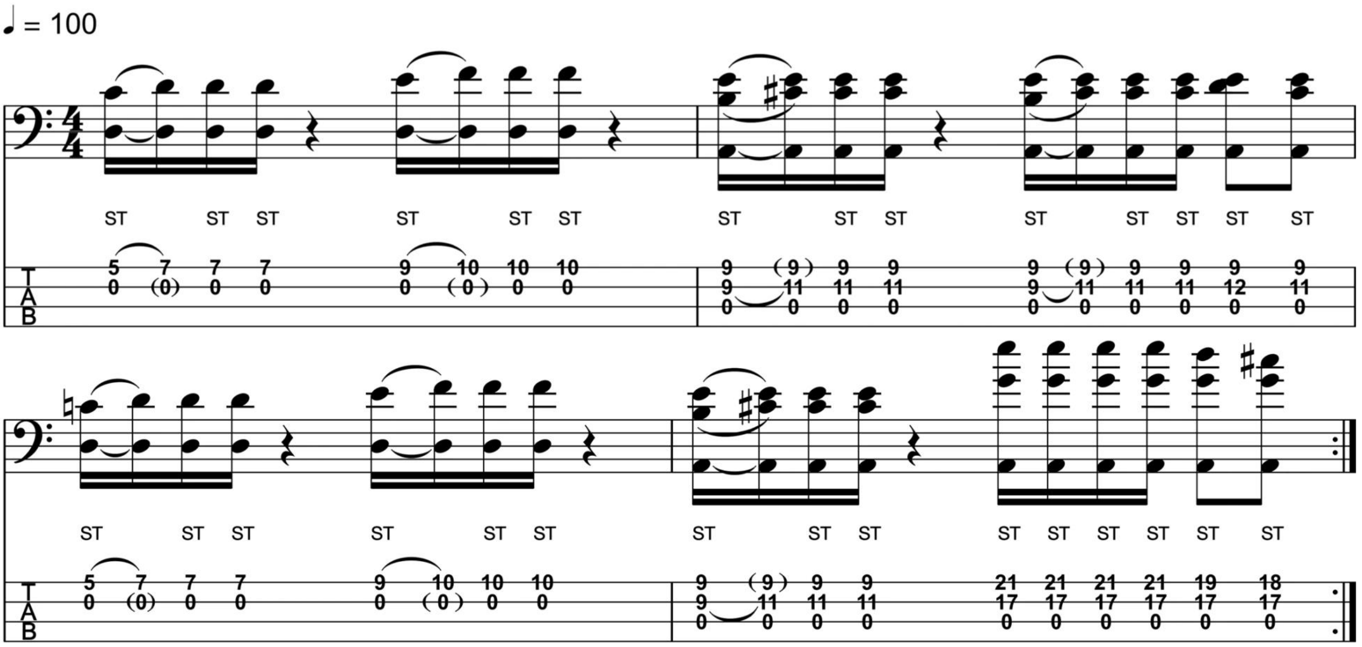
In this exercise, you will have to strum upwards and downwards on the first and second eighth notes of the first and third beats. The goal here is to make both your down- and upstrokes even in volume.

Example 2



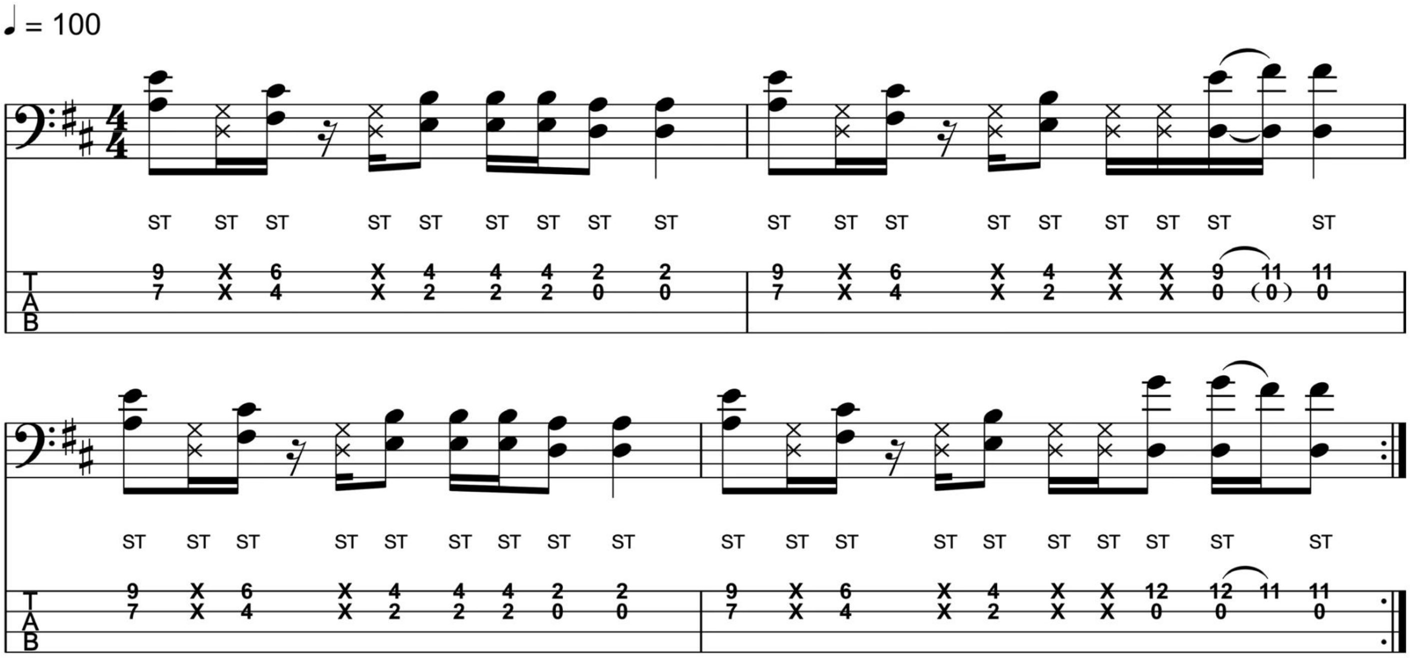
Ghost notes work very well with the strumming technique. This exercise is the same as the previous one except that the rests have been filled with strummed ghost notes. You should play this exercise with a consistent down/up motion, starting with a downstroke.

Example 3



It's likely that you'll already be familiar with 10ths, which are compound major or minor 3rds. This means that they are major/minor thirds that sit an octave (or two octaves) above the root note. These useful melodic devices are frequently used in conjunction with open strings when strumming. This exercise features some of the major and minor 10ths that are playable with the open strings on a four-string bass.

Example 4

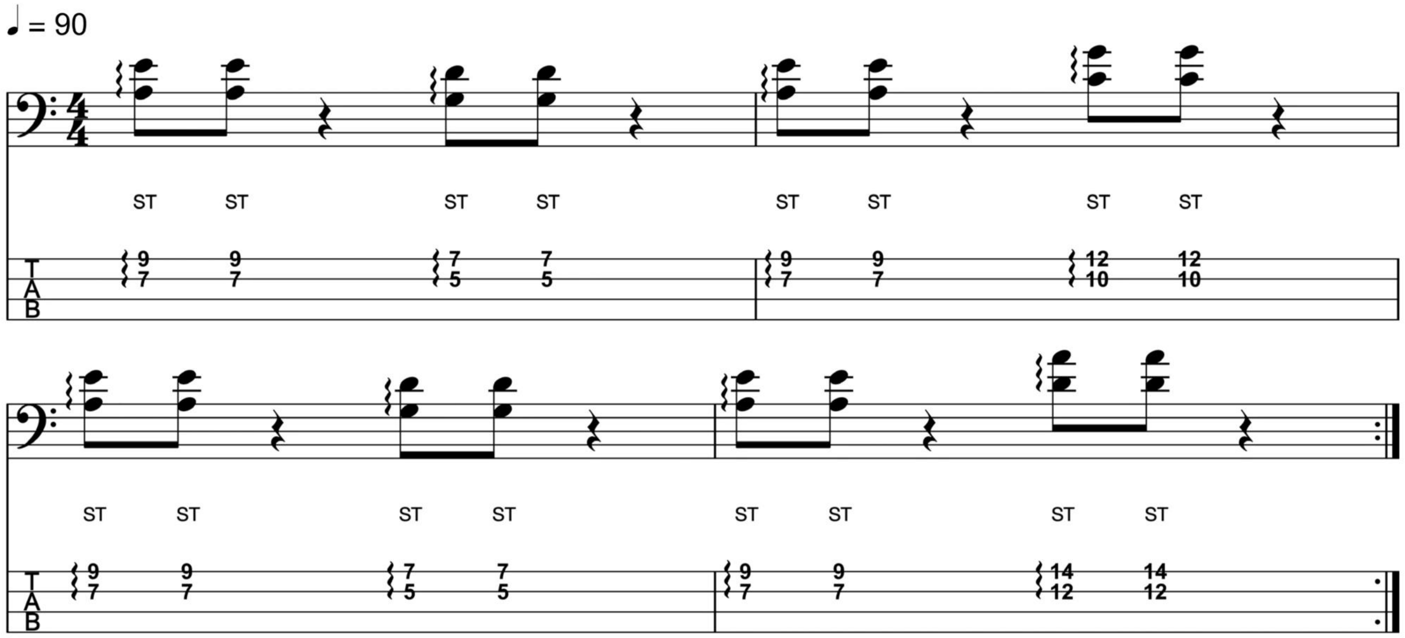


Power chords are also very popular. This exercise is reminiscent of Stanley Clarke's classic 'School Days' and consists predominantly of power chords, with a few tenths thrown in for good measure.

THE 'FLICK' TECHNIQUE

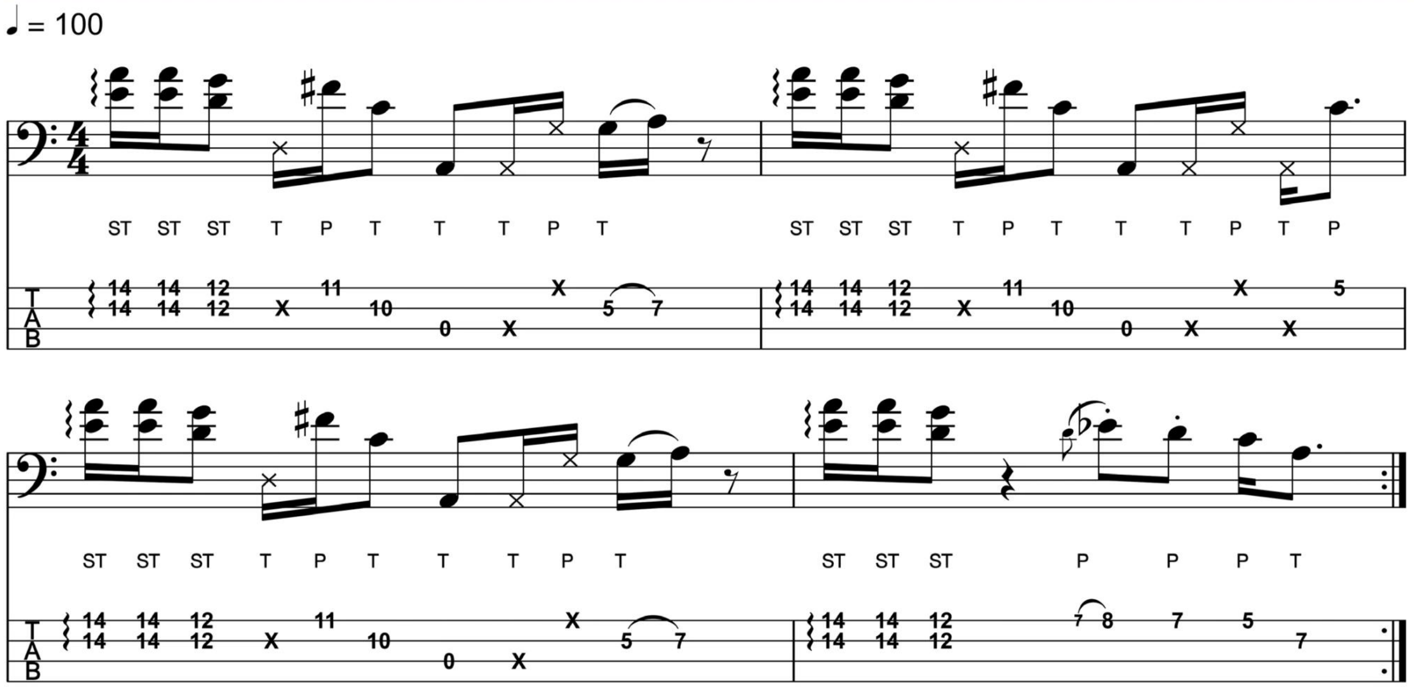
Some players have adapted the strumming technique by flicking their fingers downwards one after the other in quick succession. This is a classical guitar technique and works on the bass as well. Rather than flicking all your fingers downwards at once, you simply stagger the action slightly, leading with the little finger. This adds rhythmic flavour to the line. In the following exercises this technique has been notated using a wavy line next to the appropriate notes.

Example 5



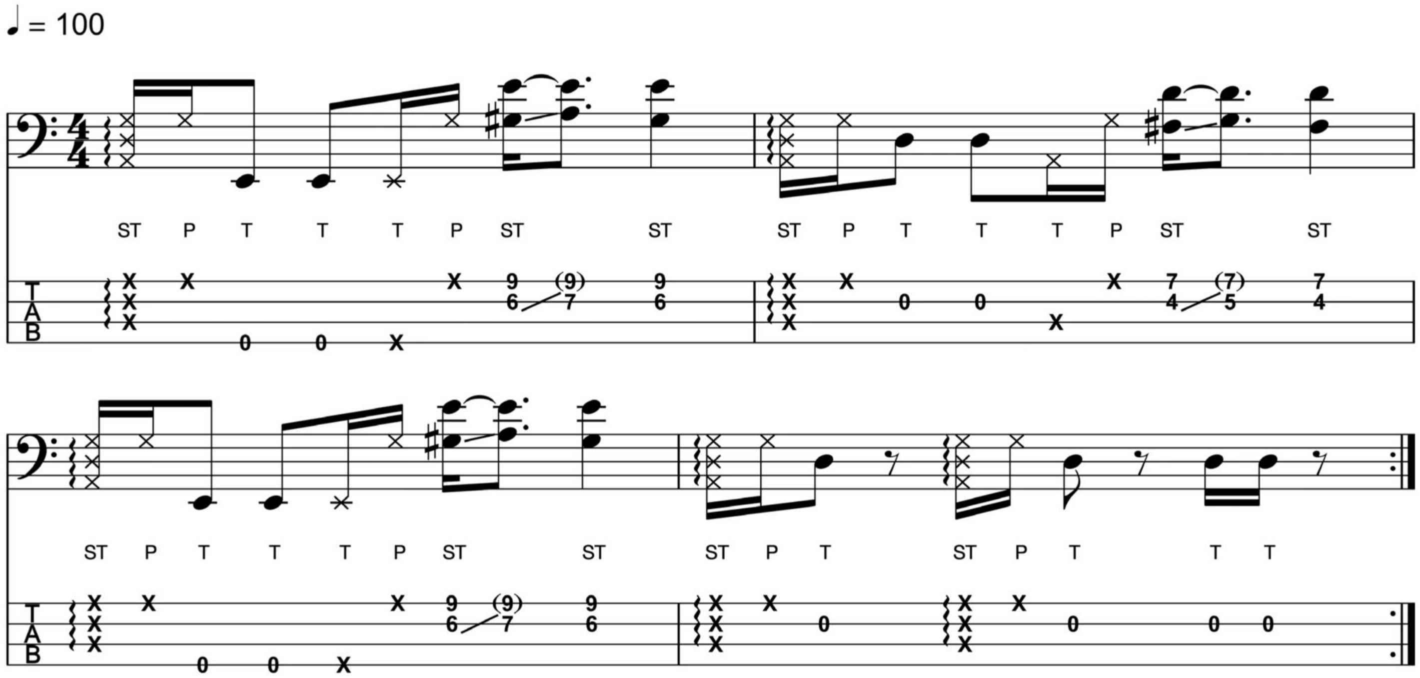
This exercise is very simple and should be played at a slow tempo so that you can hear how this 'flicking' technique should sound.

Example 6



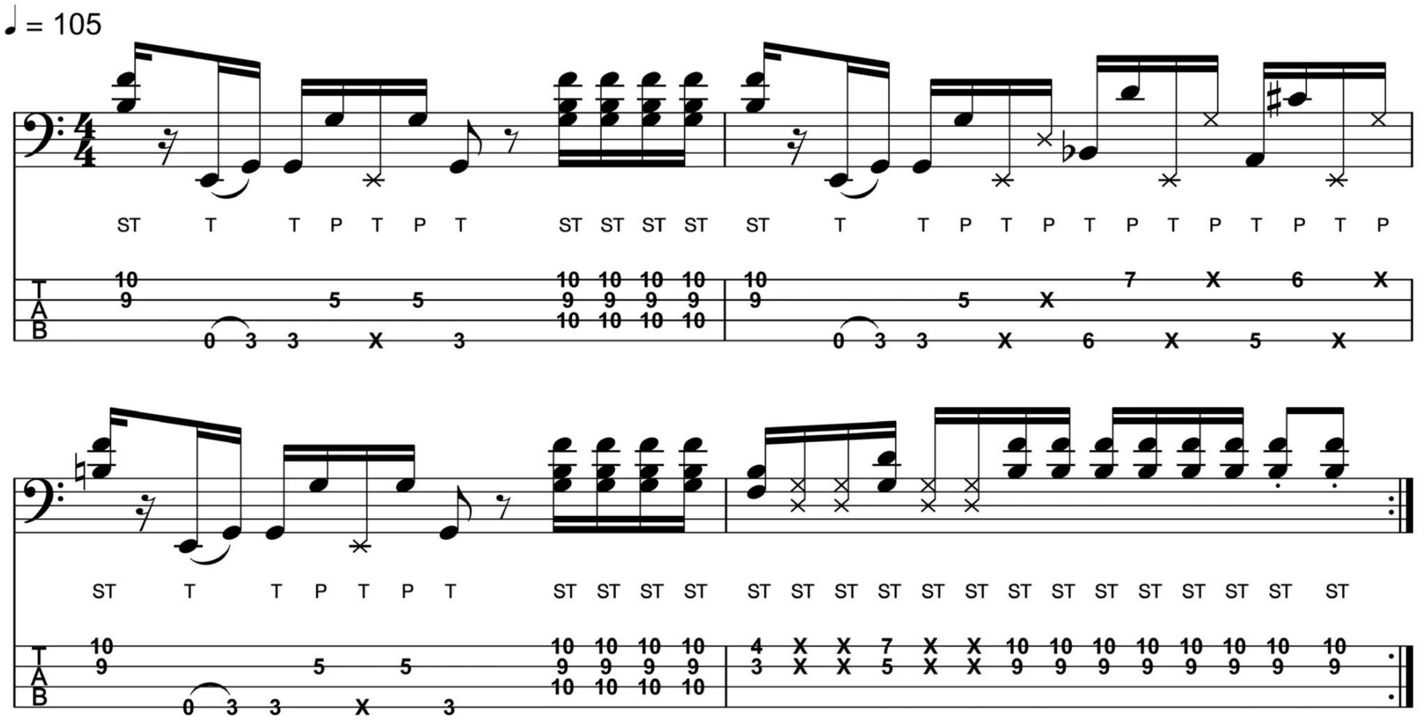
This exercise features the flicking technique in every bar. Practise this slowly – it should help you become adept at incorporating the flicking technique into your slap playing.

Example 7



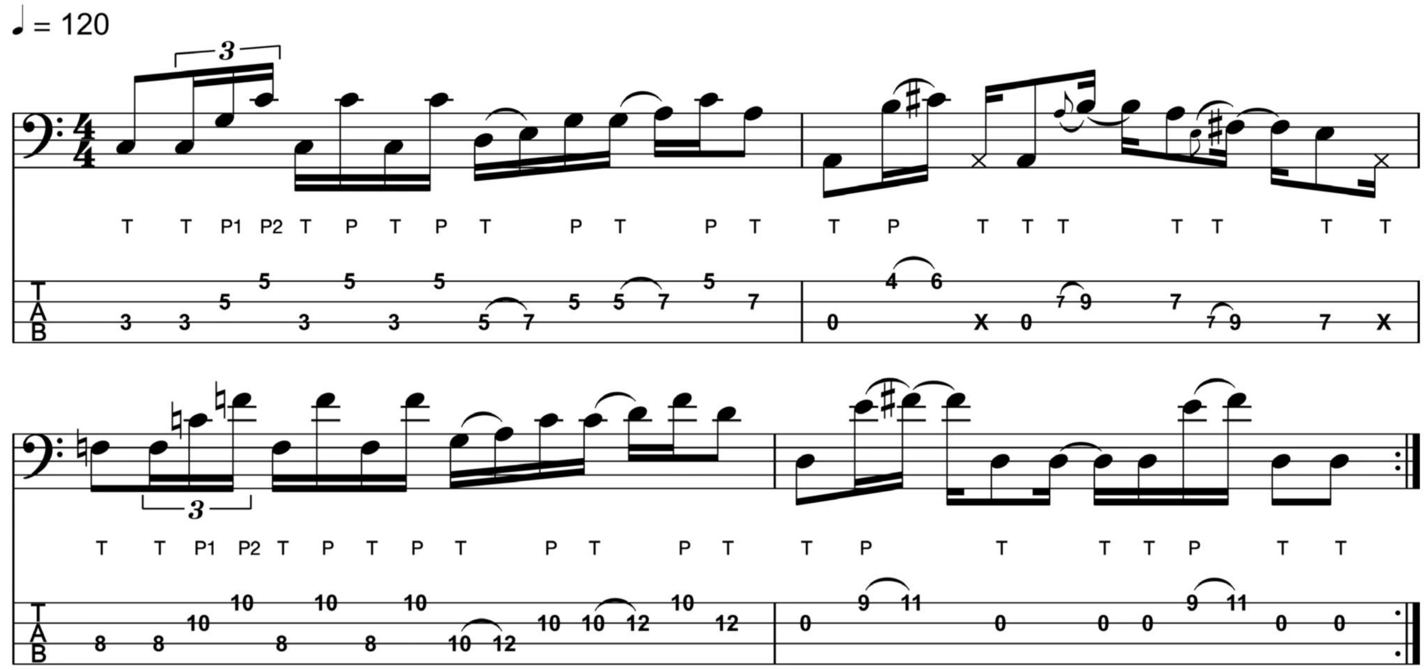
This technique can also be used to play ghost notes. Here it is used as a rhythmic device to add interest to the line.

Example 8



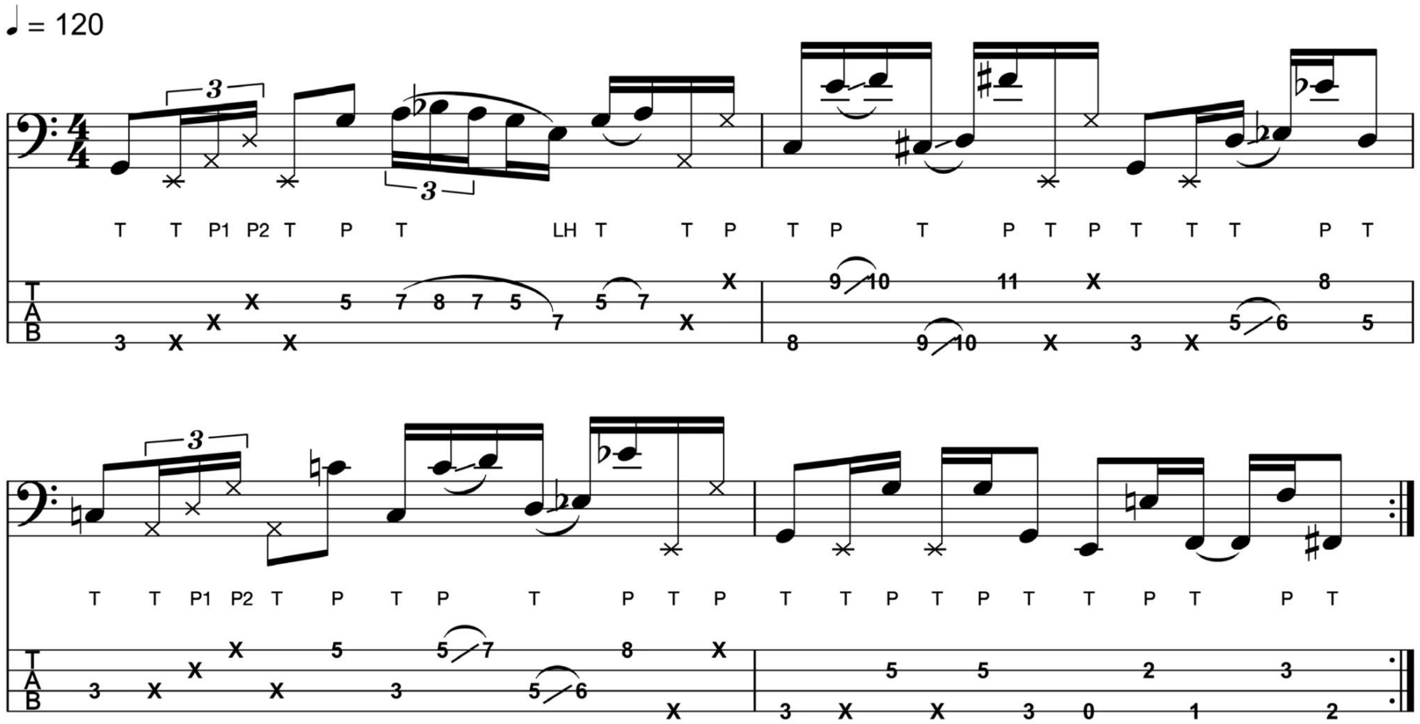
This exercise is a funk line in G that features a lot of strumming. Notice that the double stops on the first beat of the bar are the classic combination of third and seventh, as covered in a previous issue. 10ths are used in the second bar in place of octaves to add extra harmonic interest.

Example 9



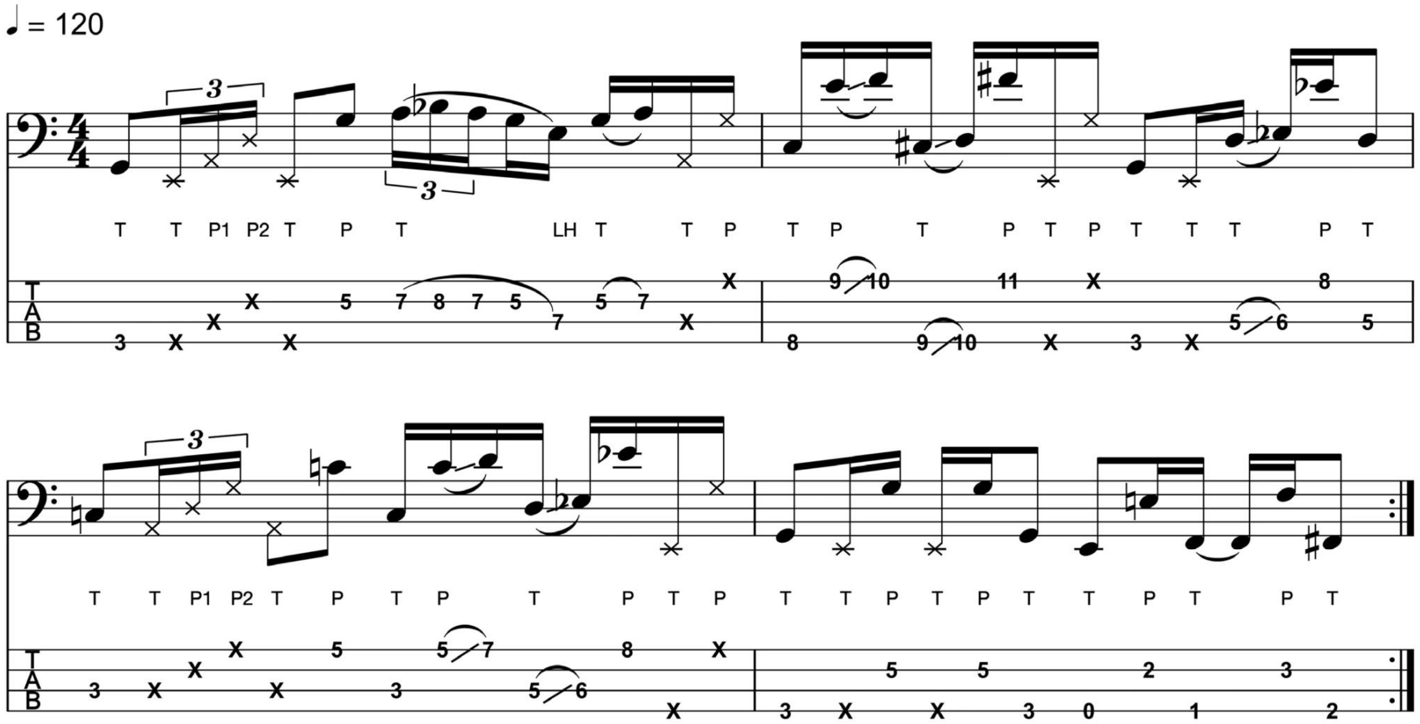
This exercise features several tenths played with open strings. Strummed ghost notes have been added to fill in the rhythms. The strummed chord in the second bar is played by fretting the B and E at the ninth fret. You should barre these notes with the first finger, then hammer on the C♯ from the B as you strum.

Example 10



This is another line that features many open-string 10ths. Open keys such as E, A and D are excellent for strumming because many of the best-sounding chords are easily playable.

Example 11



This exercise is quite tricky because of some awkward chord shapes and a quick tempo. You'll also need to be familiar with the double popping technique – see my column in the last issue – in order to execute the triplet figures on the first beat of the first and third bars.

That's it for this month, folks. We've covered a very useful technique in this column, one that can add some serious flavour to your slap playing. Next month we'll be moving on to examine how the slap bass technique can be used over the shuffle feel. Until then, happy practising...

THE LAST NOTE

The great Dan Veall returns once again to sign off the issue with a subject close to all our hearts, and essential tips about how to do it right. This month: DI boxes

Hello once again, and thank you for your kind comments regarding my column! Today, we move on from our effects pedals round-up to probably one of the most useful, yet overlooked, devices in our arsenal – the humble DI box.

WHAT IS DI ANYWAY?

Well, DI stands for Direct Injection, used when we need to take a signal from one device and make it compatible with another. Think of it as an electronic version of one of those super-useful audio adaptors we always seem to need, transforming electrical signals. Most DI boxes feature something called a Balanced Line Driver, which sends our output to a corresponding Balanced Line Receiver on a mixing desk, recorder or PA system.

IN OTHER WORDS, A DI BOX SENDS OUR BASS SIGNAL ALONG A CABLE TO A MIXING DESK, OR WHATEVER?

Yes, and what's more, there are passive and active versions of DI boxes. Each of these has its advantages and disadvantages. The passive version doesn't include any amplifying technology and doesn't need a power source, so it might not work that well with instruments that have a low output level. My advice is to go with a high-quality active DI, unless you can't power it.

FINE. I'VE GOT AN ACTIVE DI BOX. WHAT THE HELL DO ALL THOSE SWITCHES DO?

Input Level, Pad or Gain DI Boxes sometimes incorporate a switch to attenuate the input level should the signal be particularly high. Active versions may offer a gain boost.

Phase Switch Used to flip the audio phase if there are problems encountered with mixing multiple signal paths from the same instrument.

Parallel, Pass Through Sometimes the DI box isn't the end of a signal chain and we need to continue the unbalanced input signal path on to another device. This 'daisy chain' output facilitates this.

Phantom Power An active DI box can be powered remotely by a mixing desk or recorder, or a DI receiver such as that found on a computer audio interface.

Cab Sims I have a pair of DI boxes that incorporate a switchable simulation of a mic'ed-up cabinet. This is useful where mic'ing up a real speaker cabinet is not possible but when you still need to present an engineer with a balanced DI signal.

Ground Lift This switch can safely help to break an earth loop, which is often a cause of mains noise getting into a signal path. In the past, venues, techs or musicians would remove the earth pin in the mains supply to fix the problem. Don't do this. Please.

XLR Socket Three-pin connectors invented by James H. Cannon. The output of a DI box features male XLR connectors, while the input of a balanced line receiver, such as that of an audio interface, has female XLR connectors.

Next month, we'll have a look at what happens when we install a DI circuit inside a pedal, processor, amplifier or other piece of hardware such as an audio interface.

Thanks for reading! Each of my columns will give you some ideas of your own — and remember, there are no rules, so do experiment and let me know how you get on. If you've got a question for me, find me on social media: @DanVeallBassist.

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Tomm Stanley
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